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STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

F. J. FOAKES-JACKSON

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Studies in the Life of the Early Church
History of the Christian Church from the Earliest Times to A.D. 461
The Biblical History of the Hebrews to the Christian Era
A Brief Biblical History—Old Testament
A Brief Biblical History—New Testament

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PREFACE

The author hopes that these brief sketches may be of some service to both teachers and students of Primitive Christianity; but he also addresses himself to the general reader who desires to know what Primitive Christianity was, and what ideas prevailed in the infancy of the Church. Without some knowledge of the conditions of life and modes of thought of a world so remote as that of the Roman Empire before the days of Constantine it is not possible to understand what the religion of Christ actually was, and how it made its way among mankind. At the present time it is important to know the circumstances under which the dogmas and institutions, still recognized in the Church, came into being. Many chapters have appeared in the *Churchman* (New York) and are reprinted here by the courtesy of the editors of that paper. The author desires to acknowledge with gratitude the help he has received from his old friend the Rev. A. C. Jennings of England and from the Rev. F. J. Moore of Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION

Church History: the story of (A) an institution, or (B) of opinions

The story of the Christian Church is, of course, interwoven with that of the religion, but is not identical with it. The one is the history of an institution, the other of opinions. The institution was at first a small sect of Jews, whose existence was hardly recognised in the larger community of Israel with its various sects and parties. In the next stage it consisted of a number of small communities in different cities, bound together by a common belief that Jesus was the Messiah or Christ. Then the believers proclaimed that they were a new race of men (*genos*), in the world but not of it, a race moreover distinct from the Jews. Next, by a silent process, which is practically unrecorded, they developed almost "national" laws, customs, and peculiarities which drew them into a federation of *ecclesiæ* or churches, generally making some larger church —Rome, Alexandria, Carthage, or Antioch, as a centre. This led to the development of the idea that there was one great institution, the Church Universal or Catholic, outside which no Christianity was possible. Under this institution there grew up a form of government, common to all in its component parts, a common principle of law, certain recognised rules of conduct, certain documents

accepted as authoritative. There further arose a sort of representative system of legislative assemblies and a recognised discipline of offenders. In the course of time there were disputes, partly owing to the rivalries of great churches, partly to the discontent of individuals, partly to attempts to introduce innovations, and partly to objections to changes in the ancient order. These things belong to the history of all institutions.

But suddenly a great change came to the Church. It is at least a partial truth that the Christians became an institution in order, passively at least, to resist the Roman empire. They fought by enduring persecution; and no sooner did the largest and best organised attempt to destroy Christianity prove unsuccessful, than the Empire summoned the Church to co-operate with it. In an incredibly short time the once afflicted body passed through the stages of being an institution patronised by government to that of the only religion recognised by law, and the Church was soon able to claim that the human government, which had acknowledged its right to exist, was itself dependent on the Church for its authority.

B. The Church as a repository of truth

This is the history of the Church as an institution. The other side is the history of opinion. This is, of course, less easy to trace. Facts are safe stepping stones. Moreover, we can regard the Church as an institution from the outside. Even the question, important as this is, whether it is of divine or human origin need not here disturb us. What has to be ascertained are the external facts in the progress of the Church, what its organisation was, what its laws were, how it was governed. This can be done by the historian pure and simple. But there is the other aspect, to interpret which demands sympathy for the spirit which animated the Church, as well as knowledge of the thought

which influenced its development. One of the chief purposes of the Church was to conserve unchanged the truths which believers in Christ had received from Him and from His immediate disciples, and it must be always borne in mind that these truths were believed to be final and unchangeable. It was firmly held that no new truth had been revealed, and that what might to us appear to be a novelty was merely an explanation of the original revelation. To take a single example, the word *Trias* or Trinity does not appear in the Scriptures of the Church nor can it be found in any Christian document before the year A.D. 180. Yet it was universally believed that, from the day of Pentecost and onwards, the Christians had accepted the doctrine, even though ignorant of the word in which it was enshrined. Whether this is the fact or not may be questioned by us; but was never doubted for a moment for many generations. To take another instance. Very few traces appear in the first centuries of church history of the intense reverence in which the Virgin Mother of the Lord was held. Yet those who maintain the necessity of paying the highest honour to Mary are never tired of insisting that, from the very first, she was considered to be the foremost of the saints, and was regarded as the flower of the entire human race. Their opponents, on the other hand, deny to Mary the honour paid by Catholic theologians, because they maintain that in the Primitive Church it was withheld from her. But orthodox catholic and orthodox protestant are agreed in this, that the worship paid to Mary can only be justified if, from the very first, it was, at any rate implied, in the faith once delivered to the saints.

Reverence for primitive tradition

It is important to remember this attitude of mind in order to understand the side of church history which deals

with the development of beliefs. We find various different opinions promulgated, which were rejected and condemned: but the same claim was made for these, as for the accepted doctrines of orthodoxy. Every heretical teacher declared that he was in possession of the original Gospel, that he interpreted the real doctrine of Jesus and His disciples, and that his "novelties" were nothing of the kind, because the rest of the Christian world were the real innovators. In fact no one dared promulgate any doctrine, except by claiming that it was either primitive, or at least the secret doctrine of the first teachers of the Faith. Even at the Reformation and afterwards the boldest innovators declared that they upheld the Christianity of the first age. This is so opposed to the modern notion that what is new has a presumption in its favour, that it is not easy for the student to adjust his mind to the universal sentiment of a past which is by no means remote.

Triumph of the Church due to its organisation and to its system of law

In the development of the Church, both as an institution and as a system of teaching, external influences played a great part. As it first fought, then it copied, and finally dominated the parts of the Empire which survived its triumph. It dealt similarly with the religions and philosophies which it encountered. The knowledge of the condition of the world in the days when the Church was in process of formation, and its dogmas were receiving definite shape, is a most important key to the situation. One of the most striking features of early Christianity was its power of organisation. This the Jewish communities undoubtedly possessed; but, as is now abundantly clear, the whole of society was permeated by clubs and associations, with officials, funds, and regulations recognised by the law. In some form or another the Christians,

although everywhere their religion was illegal, were able to combine. In its world organisation, the Church followed the Empire. Long before Constantine's edict of toleration, its capitals were those of the Roman world. Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Carthage, Cæsarea in Cappadocia, were each a Christian metropolis, the authority of whose bishop extended over the territory which recognised the leadership of his city. It was the same with the jurisprudence of the Church which had a remarkable attraction for the legal profession, and numbered great lawyers among its adherents.

Influence of the Roman world on Christian devotion and opinion

On its devotional side, the influence of the world around was plainly felt. The first Christian churches were no doubt synagogues, and the worship was entirely Jewish. But directly they became distinctively Christian, their services showed traces of Gentile influence. Baptism was soon transformed into a ceremony of initiation, with secrets communicated only at the time of the performance of the rite, the Eucharist from a meal developed into a ceremonial union of the communicant with the Lord. Strive as they would, the most devoted Christians could not prevent education continuing to be that of the old world, based on the classics of antiquity. To make their views intelligible, it was necessary for churchmen to adopt the language of the philosophy of their time. Some did more: they adopted the dress and even the name of philosophers. Nor did most Christians isolate themselves from their former friends. The fact that stern teachers and moralists urged them to do so is a sufficient proof that they did not. But their own monuments, inscriptions, etc., show that a man could belong to the Church and not differ very markedly from his friends outside. It is not

surprising that Christians were powerfully influenced by contemporary ideas. It is therefore absolutely necessary to know something about the society in the midst of which Christianity made its appearance.

The "Fathers" often disappointing

There are many other things which one ought to know, but it is far more important in embarking on the apparently trackless ocean of ecclesiastical history to decide where we want to go than to be informed what our destination ought to be. The student has to be introduced to certain mysterious people of whom he has heard vaguely as "the Fathers" and when he meets them, he is apt to be disillusioned, for truly they are rather disappointing. Their writings are mostly controversial. They are attacking heresies which appear to us impossible or absurd, or they are disputing on questions which are of no interest to us: sometimes they are abusing one another. When they are dogmatic, they use terms which are not familiar to us, and we have almost to learn a new language; and when they abuse their opponents, we wonder how far what they say is consistent with their Christian profession. They are most serviceable to us when they are endeavouring to explain to the heathen what they believe; but even then their arguments are often unconvincing. Another reason why they are uninteresting to us is that they all belong to much the same class. Nearly all of them are clergy, generally bishops, and their ideas are mostly conventional. There are striking exceptions, Justin the philosopher, Tertullian the lawyer, Clement of Alexandria the teacher, and above all Origen; but these are not average Christians: they are among the best minds of their age.

Need for information not "patristic"

When we study Church history, we are told what these leaders thought and argued about. But what we want to

know is of what kind was the religion that spread like a fire along the shores of the Mediterranean in the first, second, and third centuries. To discover this one has to go outside the prescribed course of patristic reading. Here and there it is true the Fathers throw light on the popular religion and practice; but, if one would know what it really was, it is necessary to read what has survived in books little recognised and at times condemned by the Church. Inscriptions—especially in the Catacombs—help us to realise something of the domestic and social life, and the so-called *Apostolic Canons and Constitutions* reveal a condition of affairs which—to say the least—will surprise those who are unfamiliar with such documents. A perusal of the spurious *Acts* of the Apostles will show how people craved for the miraculous, and how the most incredible tales were widely accepted. The adventures of some Apostles as they are related can only be paralleled in the *Arabian Nights*.

Psychology of martyrdom

The psychology of martyrdom is also something which we desire to understand. With persecution modern missionaries are still familiar. They can tell how the approach of the storm is signalled by a sudden wave of unpopularity like that which heralded the persecution of Lyons, of Vienne. They know how the officials are often ready to protect them, but are forced into hostile action by clamorous mobs, as when Polycarp was put to death after the regular games at Smyrna were concluded. They know how public opinion is worked upon by interested persons for political reasons, as it was by Nero. They are aware that their schemes for relieving misery are made the handle for charges as absurd as those of Thyesteian banquets and Œdipodœan *mixeis*. But, and this is not to their discredit, they do not share in the extraordinary de-

sire for martyrdom characteristic of the first age of the Church. They are not animated by that suicidal passion for death which caused the rulers of the ancient Church almost to discourage martyrdom. Nor do they display that extraordinary bitterness against those who tried to save their lives by compliance, which we find in the Donatist and other controversies.

To understand the meaning of this fanaticism, the Acts of martyrdom and the proceedings of some ecclesiastical assemblies have to be read and appreciated.

Interesting questions

There is much else we should like to know, for example, what part women played in the progress of Christianity. That it was considerable cannot be questioned; but we have only here and there indications as to their functions. What were the chief features of a primitive Christian worship? This, one might expect, is a question easily answered; but it is not. We have to rely on scattered hints and generally to bear in mind that, when our information seems precise, it is frequently late and we are in danger of taking for granted that the worship of the fourth or fifth century was similar to that of the second.

Why is Christianity a benefit?

But, after all, most of these questions are of secondary interest. There is one, however, which is of primary importance, namely, what good did Christianity bring to mankind? What is there that makes valid its claim to be the most vital influence that has appeared in history?

One must go below the surface to answer this question

Investigation will not, possibly, make the history of the beginnings of Christianity other than disappointing. The great, central figure of the Master becomes more shadowy as the historical problem is discerned, and, if

we judge by the literature, the gracious character depicted by the Synoptists does not seem to have been the attraction so much as the transcendent power of the Saviour. Yet, as a rule, the literature of the Church is neither better nor worse than that of the age. The New Testament stands out pre-eminent, and the most doubtful canonical book is superior to the best parts of the Apostolic Fathers. The later writers from Justin Martyr onward are sensible, ingenious, often learned, almost invariably commonplace. Down to A.D. 450 the Christian community produced very few original thinkers, and still fewer in the centuries which followed. Marcion and Tertullian among those without, and Origen and Augustine among those who died in communion with the Church, are notable exceptions. Tertullian's "Apology," Augustine's "Confessions," some passages of John Chrysostom, a few hymns of Ambrose and Prudentius, are about all the good literature produced during the most eventful movement in human thought. We must go far below the surface to discover the secret of the triumph of Christ's religion.

CHAPTER II

JUDAIC CHRISTIANITY

The word Judaic as here employed

Judaic is a word used in different senses when applied to Christianity. It is at one time made to mean an element of Judaism which is incompatible with the Christian religion, like the compulsory circumcision of Gentile converts, condemned by Paul, or the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, reprobated by Ignatius. Or it may be used of a legalism, supposed to be alien to the freedom of the Gospel; thus the whole system of an hierarchy, prescribed feasts and festivals, are called Judaic. Here Judaic is applied to Christianity in the non-controversial sense, meaning that Christianity was at one time a phenomenon in Judaism, and that the first believers were regarded as a Jewish sect.

Jesus as a Jewish teacher

It is an undoubted fact that Jesus, according to the clear testimony of the four Gospels, was a Jew. He opposed the uncharitable and unreasonable interpretation of the Law, as for example, the attempt to make the observance of the Sabbath an excuse for forbidding an act of charity. He denounced any interpretation of tradition which placed the duty of paying tithe above mercy and the love of God. He even declared that the Mosaic Law of divorce, as ordained because of the hardness of Israel's heart, had to yield to a higher principle of morality. But this did not prevent the Lord observing and

enjoining obedience to the Law, and in conforming to the customs and religion of His people.

The first believers observed the Law

It is the same when we leave the Gospel for the Acts. The first believers were scrupulous in attendance at the Temple; Peter could declare that he had never eaten anything common or unclean (Acts x, 14); the people regarded the new sect with favour; even Paul is represented as a scrupulous observer of Jewish custom and careful not unnecessarily to wound the religious prejudices of the people of Jerusalem (Acts xxi, 18-26). In his Epistles, it is true, he shows himself more independent of the older apostles than he is represented in Acts to have been; but throughout he is unmistakably Jewish in his attitude of mind. If he gives up his privileges of a Hebrew of the Hebrews for the sake of Christ, they are none the less privileges (Phil. iii, 4-8). If he admits the Gentile to the full participation of the Gospel, he is fully aware that he has taken an extreme step; that God has permitted it is a mystery (Eph. iii, 6). Despite the fact that he declares "to the Greeks, I became a Greek," he is always a Jew holding out the right hand of fellowship to Greeks, and he speaks to them from the higher level of a Jewish moralist.

James, the Lord's brother

According to tradition, James, the Lord's brother, was so typical a Hebrew saint that it is conceivable that that he might have become even more honoured in a Jewish Christian church than Jesus Himself. His virtues, manifested in his asceticism, his prayerfulness, and his strict observance of the Law, and crowned by a martyr's death just before the fall of Jerusalem, were eminently calculated to evoke popular admiration. That he sank into a secondary place, and is now known as "St. James

the Less," is a proof of the failure of early Judaic Christianity. It is worth noticing that, in the Epistle which bears his name, the Christian meeting place is called a synagogue (James ii, 2). James and the family of the Lord soon faded into total obscurity.

Jews and Christians maintain relations for a time

Scattered notices in the Jewish writings indicated that for a time, even after the destruction of Jerusalem, there were amicable, if somewhat strained, relations between Jew and Christians. There were Christian rabbis who disputed with the orthodox teachers, and were sometimes rivals in medicine, and also in magic. The Gospels were to Jews somewhat in the same relation as the heretical apocrypha were to Catholic churchmen. That the rabbis had to condemn the perusal of the Gospels was a proof of their popularity in certain quarters. There are stories of Jews consulting Christian rabbis on legal points and even records of rabbinical decisions by Jesus Himself. That He should be mentioned at all is remarkable considering how little is recorded of Hillel, of Shammai, and even of Gamaliel. After the fall of Jerusalem, Judaism seems to have been guided by liberal and moderate men. Johanan ben-Zaccai, the leader and almost the founder of the New Judaism, was a man of peace, and escaped from the city and the Zealots to establish the School of Jamnia. For a time the fanatical Israelites were quiet; and a new legalism, without temple or priesthood, was being silently constructed.

Bar-cochba's revolt—Akiba

Then there burst out a revolt against the Romans which, if we had but a Josephus to record it, might appear as sanguinary as the days of Vespasian and Titus. First in Cyprus, then in Syria, the Jews massacred and defeated their enemies, and were only subdued by a supreme

military effort on the part of Rome. The rebellion produced a general and a saint. The military leader was Bar-cochba, the Son of a Star, the saint was Akiba, once the most indifferent, afterwards the most zealous of Jews. It is to Akiba that we owe the minute study of Scripture that sees inspiration in every letter of the law. He is the martyr *par excellence* of Judaism. He endured every torture with surprising fortitude, and in the midst of his sufferings remembered that it was the hour of prayer. It was he who recognised in Bar-cochba the Messiah; and from his day Judaism finally broke with Christianity. Yet, even after the great war, Justin Martyr as a Christian and Trypho the Jew dispute amicably about prophecy, and part with friendly hopes that they may resume their discussion.

The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

The *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* is on the Christian side an indication of the power of Jewish thought in a community of believers. It has been described as "a catechism, intensely Jewish." The rules for Baptism are cast in a thoroughly rabbinic mould. If possible choose a running stream, failing that still water will suffice. If necessary the water may be warmed. The validity of Baptism depends on the exact performance of the rite, but all circumstances are considered. This is good Pharisaism. The law must be observed, the ritual is important; but, where inconveniences occur, these may be modified. This we are inclined to condemn as casuistry; but it is really in consonance with the wise Sabbatarianism of Jesus.

Anti-Judaism of Ignatius

Signs of a distinct break with Judaism on the part of Christians appear in Ignatius. In the alleged Abgar correspondence and in the "Apology" of Aristides there

is little anti-Judaism; but in the fervid letters of the martyr it is very marked. To keep the Sabbath is of the nature of apostasy. Christianity is here declared emphatically not to be a form of Judaism. This does not mean that the letters are late; for Paul condemns the observance of Sabbaths and Jewish festivals by Gentiles, and to John the opponents of Jesus are not the rabbis or the priesthood but "the Jews." Yet neither apostle goes as far as Ignatius; with him Judaism is the enemy. Judaising is becoming a sort of apostasy. The Jewish and the Christian teachers by the middle of the second century began to refuse their disciples a middle way. The decision must be on one side or the other.

Judaism a heresy

Judaism became heresy when the Catholic Church insisted on the confession, not only of the Messiahship, but of the divinity of Jesus, whom the Jews friendly to the Church acknowledged as the greatest of prophets and their Lord, but stopped there. Thus there are found Gnostic heretics with markedly Jewish characteristics, notably the Ebionites and one sect of Nazarenes, who were acknowledged to hold the faith though they retained the ceremonial obligations of Judaism.

The Christian hierarchy modelled on the Jewish

The general policy of Judaism towards Christianity as time went on was to ignore it as much as possible; and even controversy died down as the two religions became perfectly distinct from one another. The wide dispersion of the Jews had, of course, no little to do with the spread of the Christian Church. In every place the Jewish synagogue afforded a model for a church community with the strange difference that whilst Judaism practically lost its priesthood with the fall of Jerusalem, and was able

to dispense with it, the Christians tended more and more to restore the counterpart of the Jewish hierarchy.

Philo and Hellenistic Judaism

They also did much to conserve what Judaism had lost. Despite its part in Stephen's death and its hostility to Paul, Hellenistic Judaism must have shown itself more liberal toward Greek ideas than that of Palestine. It was permeated by Greek thought; and its consummation is seen in Philo. Here we have an earnest Jew, devoted to his religion with no sympathy for those of his countrymen who inclined to heathenism, and at the same time a scholar soaked in the philosophy of the Platonic School. His biblical exegesis and his methods are not rabbinic but philosophic, and he appears more influenced by Platonism than any New Testament writer. Earlier than Philo are the so-called *Wisdom of Solomon,* and the Greek translation of the *Wisdom* of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, better known as *Ecclesiasticus.* In these works we see that the Hellenistic Jews had a literature and a philosophy of their own; and this powerfully influenced the theology and ethics of nascent Christianity. Nor is this all. One of the most thrilling stories of Jewish patriotism, the memory of which appeals to every Jewish heart—that of the Maccabees—has survided in two Greek versions, and there is a Maccabean literature including three other books. This is supplemented by the voluminous writings of Josephus —his minute description of the siege of Jerusalem, his recasting the history of his people in the *Antiquities,* where he endeavours to make the Old Testament narrative acceptable to heathen readers, and his elaborate defence of Judaism against Apion. Nor must we forget the apocalyptic literature, those visions of judgment of heaven and hell with their elaborate angelology and reconstructions of the new world, as well as the curious attempts to

make the heathen of remote antiquity testify to the choice of Israel by the one, true God in the *Sibylline Oracles.*

The Christian Church preserved the literature of Hellenistic Judaism

All this would have perished but for the fact that Christianity, for various reasons, preserved the monuments of Hellenistic Judaism, which had played so large a part in the history of the early empire. We should never have known otherwise how extensive the Dispersion had been, or how powerful the Jews were in Alexandria and Rome. Herod would have been nothing but a name, the Hasmonean Kings would have been shadows, and learned men would have disputed as to how Titus captured Jerusalem, and why in the days of Claudius there were Jews in Rome. We should have known nothing of the hopes and dreams of a vast, widely spread community; in a word, a whole phase of Judaism—extending over centuries—would have disappeared but for Christian scribes.

Judaism becomes self-centred

The fact is, that with the fall of Jerusalem and the still greater disaster of the rebellion of Bar-cochba, Judaism became an entirely self-centred religion, dominated by the idea that the Law must be observed, and the distinctive character of the nation maintained at all costs. The liberal Judaism of the dispersed among the Greeks was gone; its spirit died, but it revived in Christianity. Philo, though he most probably never so much as heard of Christ, was in some respects almost Christian, and the Church preserved his works which the synagogue allowed to sink into oblivion. Josephus is claimed by some to have been at least an Ebionite Christian. The Therapeutæ and Essenes gave the asceticism, so admired by the Church, an example and an impetus; but the Jews would have allowed both to pass into complete oblivion.

After the third century there is little, if any, Jewish literature in Greek. If the Jews denounced their Christian enemies they did so in language which no one but themselves could read. Even proselytising, which had been once eagerly pressed, was now practically abandoned in the long period of the isolation of Israel from the world. Talmudic Judaism is utterly unlike that described in Acts, with the synagogues crowded with proselytes and even Gentile hearers.

Why Christians could not entirely break with Judaism—Marcion

The Christians on their part tried to break away from Judaism just as the Jews did from them. The failure was due to several causes, mainly to the necessity of retaining the Old Testament. Marcion, that remarkable heretical teacher, was the pioneer in trying to push Paulinism to its logical conclusion. Paul had admitted that the Law was unable to save; Marcion went a step farther in declaring that it was not inspired by the true God, that being justice without mercy and therefore imperfect justice, it was opposed to the teaching of Jesus. His real critical discernment led him to conclude that two of the three synoptists were Jewish in tone, and that truly Christian liberality and mercy were to be best found in Luke, whose Gospel he treated with almost the freedom of a modern scholar. To him the God of the Jews was an inferior deity, who meant well, but made mistakes through his rigidity. His followers were only good in a limited sense. But Marcion's liberalism was saved from Gnostic laxity by his uncompromising insistence on a moral law which went to extreme lengths of ascetic practice. He admitted no tampering with paganism; and among his followers the same zeal for martyrdom was shown as by the orthodox believers. His was emphatically a non-Judaic Christian-

ity. His church was extensive and widespread; but, though it lasted for centuries and the religion reappeared in different forms, it could not succeed because, if Christians were allowed to repudiate the Law entirely, they could not appeal to the Prophetical writings as an arsenal of proof of the truth of the revelation of Christ, nor to the Psalms as a monument of devotion. A purely Gentile form of Christianity in fact, could have had little chance of permanence.

The Church retains parts of Judaism: and becomes the successor of the Dispersion

The Church profited greatly by its adherence to the moral teaching of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, and by skilfully adapting the Jewish polity to its own requirements. It is remarkable how, in every assertion of ecclesiastical authority, the appeal was made to the Jewish hierarchy. Every church became an Israel in miniature, with the bishop as Priest, the deacon as Levite, and the laity as the people of God. The Old Testament was at least as deeply studied as the New; and one is constantly amazed at familiarity of the Fathers with books which modern Christians hardly read. The discipline and the jurisdiction of the Synagogue was taken over; the mediæval Courts Christian are in a sense the heritage of Judaism. With the disappearance of the Hellenists before rabbinic discipline, the Christian Church took the place of the Greek Judaism of Philo, Josephus, and the Sybil, and became in a sense the legitimate successor of the *Diaspora*.

CHAPTER III

GENTILE CHRISTIANITY

In the New Testament Gentile Christianity was somewhat feeble, existing chiefly on sufferance, and almost apologising for its existence: within a few years, perhaps even before the appearance of the last canonical Scripture, it was the only possible Christianity with a future. In trying to discover how this came to pass, the student has often to work without a guide and even without a lamp. It is not surprising therefore that he should fall into mistakes.

Did the Apostles receive a command from the Lord to go to the Gentiles?

Whether our Lord ordered His disciples to go to the Gentiles is not clear in the Synoptic Gospels. True the Lord after His resurrection commanded them to make all the nations their disciples (Matt. xxviii, 19); and had said earlier that "this gospel must be preached to all the Gentiles (Mark xiii, 10). But, when He sent the Twelve to proclaim the kingdom, He forbade them even to go to the Samaritans (Matt. x, 5).[1] It is plain from Peter's approach to Cornelius (Acts x) that it was once considered

[1] Despite the prohibition in Matt. x, 5, against the Twelve going to the Gentiles and the Samaritans and the implication in Acts that it was a new departure to preach to Cornelius, it is difficult to believe that He did not share in the prophetic hope that the Gentiles should not enter His Church. Judaism was at this time a proselytising religion; and the believers would naturally desire to spread the Gospel or good tidings. The fact that the Gentiles came in, not as full proselytes who had to be circumcised, but were baptised before undergoing the rite, was really the innovation.

by the author of Acts an innovation to evangelise the Gentiles. From the Jewish standpoint, the centurion Cornelius is an admirable person, as excellent as the centurion in the Third Gospel who was so highly recommended by the Jews to the Lord (Luke vii, 5). He is a worshipper of the true God, prays regularly, and gives alms liberally. A vision tells him to send for Peter to learn the truth. Peter also has a vision, of a sheet let down from Heaven full of clean and unclean animals, and he is told by a heavenly voice to kill and eat. This induces him to go to the house of Cornelius. But though he preaches to Cornelius, he does not offer baptism, till given an unmistakable sign that Cornelius and his company have received the Holy Ghost. Peter is even then compelled to justify his conduct to the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem. It is noticeable that the faith of Cornelius does not make him less a Gentile; he and his companions are men uncircumcised, and as such are outside the pale. The Judaism of Acts is more thoroughgoing than that of the *Sibylline Oracles,* which exhort the Gentiles to accept proselyte baptism without mentioning circumcision. The author of Acts evidently wishes the reader to understand that Peter had taken an extraordinary step in admitting Cornelius to communion; and in the next chapter it is said that certain evangelists from Antioch preached to the Greeks also, but it does not say that they accepted them as converts, though (Acts xi, 20-23) they are described as turning to the Lord, and Barnabas exhorted them to abide in the faith. Possibly they came to hear the new doctrine as they went to the addresses in the synagogue. Barnabas and his company, including Saul, were the first to admit uncirçumcised Gentiles unconditionally. The Council of Jerusalem in Acts xv is meant to mark a further stage. The official Church formally admits the Gentiles on certain not very clear conditions, but evidently with

the idea that they are making a concession to a minority which must be careful not to abuse its privileges. One of the problems of Acts is that Paul in his epistles represents his attitude towards the first apostles as at times almost violently independent (Gal. ii, 6), whilst in Acts he is described as conciliatory, and, at Jerusalem, deferential to authority. So far as Acts is an apology, the object is to show that Paul was after all loyal to his ancestral religion, and that the enmity of the Jews to him was unjustifiable.

I Peter addresses the Gentiles as the new Israel

The First Epistle of Peter seems to be addressed by a Jew to Gentiles. In accepting the Gospel they had given up their vain ancestral traditions. The women had become daughters of Sarah (I Pet. iii, 6). They were all part of a new Israel, a holy nation and a royal priesthood, as Israel is declared to be in the Old Testament (I Pet. ii, 9-10; cf. Ex. xix, 5). But the writer evidently speaks as a Jewish Christian from a loftier standpoint than that of his disciples. In this he recalls Paul's and every other New Testament writer's assumption that the Gentiles were as children compared with the Jews so far as religion and morality were concerned.

The first Gentile converts

It is now necessary to consider the attitude of the Apostle of the Gentiles to his followers: first to determine what the converts from heathenism were like, and afterwards Paul's theory in regard to their presence in the Church. The best introduction to Gentile Christianity is I Corinthians; and to Paul's attitude the Epistles to the Galatians and Romans.

I Corinthians

The First Epistle to the Corinthians is addressed to a church composed mainly of Gentiles, and is full of prac-

tical advice. There is hardly any hint of the controversy between Paul and his Jewish opponents; and, even when the question of eating meats offered to idols arises, nothing is said of wounding Jewish susceptibilities but of offending the "weak brother." Paul mentions the factions of Cephas, Apollos, and Christ, but he does not say that any of them connect directly with Judaism: they are merely symptoms of the inveterate propensity of a Greek community to split into parties, each with its particular watchword. The Corinthian Church cannot have been mainly Jewish or it would not have needed so much instruction in the Epistle on the elementary principles of morality, nor such warnings against idolatry. Its worship was disposed to be irregular and orgiastic, a drunken revel, or a meeting which became a babel of confusion because each desired to exhibit his spiritual gift without regard to the rest of the assembly (I Cor. xi, 21; xiv, 23). The Corinthians were more interested in the theory than in the principles of their newly adopted religion. They demanded of Paul a philosophy, when he knew they needed the most elementary instruction (I Cor. iii, 1-2). Vain, disputatious, litigious, they were ignorant of the rudimentary principles of the Gospel. Increased, as Paul says, "in all utterance and knowledge," they had little conception of the laws of sexual morality. Had they been an entirely Jewish community they would not have needed the stern admonitions about bodily purity which the Apostle gives to a still semi-pagan community, like that of the Church of Corinth (I Cor. vi, 18).

Liability to relapse

The Epistle is of special interest as revealing the task of organising a church composed mainly of Gentiles. It is one familiar to most missionaries. The Gentile converts begin by being full of zeal, and appear to be far

better Christians than those who have been for generations under the Law. But at heart they are half pagan still, and relapses are extraordinarily frequent, and occasionally very serious. Paul could not have the same confidence in men just converted from heathenism as he could for those who had had a previous training in Judaism. This the Apostle evidently felt when, in the Roman letter, he dwells on the rejection of Israel as a great mystery, on their zeal for God, though it is not according to knowledge, and on his conviction that the Church cannot be perfected till the "fulness of the Gentiles" is complete, and then "all Israel shall be saved." (Rom. x, 1 *ff*; xi, 26.)

Why Paul opposed the circumcision of Gentile converts

But Paul realised that no Gentile Church could be built up by making the converts into indifferent Jews. In the first place, circumcision was a deterrent to many promising converts, and, in the second, those who took this extreme step would be in danger of becoming more Jewish than the Jews. As Matthew records it, there is a saying of the Lord that a proselyte of the Pharisees was a worse enemy to His followers than any born Jew. (Matt. xxiii, 15.) Besides, Judaism, with its salvation by works, *i.e.*, by ceremonial observances, would be far more attractive to the Christian convert than Christianity with its insistence on simple faith. Paul's wisdom in perceiving this is more admirable to us than the arguments by which he supports his conclusions. He felt that to make the Gentiles into good Christians, it was necessary to prevent them entering into the Jewish community, and therefore he tells the Galatians that every man who accepts circumcision, using the present participle, is a debtor to keep the whole law (Gal. v, 2. 3). This means that he loses all the benefit which those who have faith in Jesus obtain, or —to use Paul's own words—is "fallen from grace";

and, as no man can keep the whole Law, he loses the salvation promised in the Gospel. In this sense Paul is the real founder, so far as we know, of Gentile Christianity, that is of a church to which a Jew might belong, but not the Gentile, if he submitted to the rite of circumcision. As time went on these Gentile communities entirely outnumbered the Jewish, and Christianity became essentially a non-Jewish worship of the God of the Old Testament, revealed in Christ.

Attraction of Christianity (a) to Jews—a deliverance

The attraction which made a Greek accept the Gospel did not ordinarily make the Jew do so. Paul hit the mark exactly when he said, "The Jews seek a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom." The people, trained in the old dispensation, were always expecting a supernatural deliverance, not so much of individuals as of the nation. This is what made them fight against Rome with such desperate fanaticism, and refuse to yield when their cause was hopeless. At the last moment they felt that something would happen—like the tenth plague which delivered their ancestors. The enemy would be smitten by God and they would go free. In accepting Jesus as Messiah, they expected in Him an immediate deliverer. His resurrection was a sign, a sure proof that He would come in glory as the judge and vindicator of the Israel of God. Thus eschatology, or the looking for a final catastrophe was characteristic of that side of Judaism which was most disposed to Christianity, and all believers, including Paul, were looking forward to the great deliverance, when Jesus should come in glory to save the elect.

(b) To Gentiles—personal salvation

But the Greek had been brought up amid no Messianic hopes; he was also little convinced by the miraculous.

Signs did not appeal to him; and he had no national religious hopes. What he wanted was personal salvation by enlightenment. He desired that his nature should undergo a change, that he as an individual should become immortal and be transformed into another man by a divine spirit. Moreover he sought in Jesus not a Messiah or national deliverer, but a Lord, to whose service he might devote himself and in whose nature he might hope to partake. These ideas he had been accustomed to before he became a Christian, and his desires had undergone no change. He found in the two ceremonies instituted by Jesus just what he needed. Baptism gave him the change of nature he desired. By it he became a new man, changed by the divine Spirit, assured of immortality. In the Lord's Supper he found a mystical union with the Master whose servant he became. Thus Gentile Christianity became more and more sacramental in its character and was organised accordingly. That there was ever a Gentile co-existent with a Jewish church is possible, but cannot be proved; but, as the Christianity which predominated was Gentile, it is allowable to imagine that a Jewish-Christian community would have been very like a synagogue with its board of elders, its local court, its reading of the Law and the Prophets and its disputations on legal points: Baptism would certainly be practised and the Eucharistic Service would have partaken of the character of a meal. A Gentile Church would have its rapidly developing hierarchy, its president who represented it to the outside, his assistants, his council. Baptism and the Eucharist would tend to become more sacramental, in the sense of conferring spiritual power and nourishment, the ceremonies would assume a character of their own, possibly influenced by the Mysteries into which some of the members had, doubtless before their conversion, been initiated.

Low morality of the Roman world accounts for laxity of some Gentile converts

All this is hypothetical, as is also the fascinating task of imagining how churches of men and women were established without the background of the moral training of Judaism. The difficulty of the task is frequently ignored, but it is a key to a great deal of early Christian literature, and an explanation of not a few reproaches which are unjustly cast upon the first Christians. The First Epistle to the Corinthians is an important clue. Here we have an almost private letter to a Gentile community only a few years, perhaps not many months, old. Truly Paul's converts were not grown men but babes in Christ. The Apostle has to give them a form of discipline, he has to create a healthy public opinion, he has to restrain excesses and curb disorders. He has to provide against gross immorality. In his other letters, Paul is always in fear of apostasy. And his experiences cannot have been unique: every missionary found it the same. That primitive Christian morality was at times unsatisfactory is not surprising. The moral condition of the world in the early days of the empire was on the whole low, not, it is true, as bad as satirists and stern censors depicted it, but certainly not what we are sometimes taught to believe it was by admirers of its best philosophic teachers. The Christian records are great helps to the understanding of the society of the time because they deal partly with the moral reformation at which the Church aimed. The councils prescribe penalties for different offences; and we learn that, if a lady kills her maid in a passion, it is by no means the greatest offence she can commit. Men of the highest character and probity, St. Cyprian for example, address fellow bishops with compliments and praise for their virtue; but, when a difference on some point arises, these venerable and honoured brethren are freely

charged with frauds, breaches of trust, and embezzlement of the money of widows and orphans. Tertullian's exaggerated severity, his uncharitable legalism, and fierce invective, is due in part to his horror at the very thinly veiled heathenism of the Christianity of his age. The Catacombs at Rome testify to the fact that the majority of the believers were by no means the enthusiastic puritans they sometimes are to our imagination. The decorations of the resting places of the dead are often those of the house of an ordinary Roman. Inscriptions, for example, record successes on the race course by a charioteer. The real problem of the Church was how to restrain without repelling these more or less half-hearted adherents. The first book of the so-called *Apostolic Constitutions*, though in its present form it may be comparatively late, throws light on what was doubtless an early phase of society. A description is given of what the lay people ought to be, and certainly the standard is not high. Men are earnestly warned against excess in apparel, especially in order to attract the opposite sex. It is more seemly that they should grow beards and don the pallium of the philosopher. The women are chiefly admonished to keep away from the public baths, where the sexes mingled apparently in complete nudity. When they bathed, it is recommended that a time should be chosen when there were few present.

Where the Church succeeded

Where the Church really succeeded with its Gentile converts was in insisting on a much higher standard of sexual relations than had ever been dreamed of; and indeed this was so strenuously insisted upon as to result in excesses which discouraged even matrimony, and compelled the authorities to condemn the extreme rigorism of Montanism, Marcionism, and similar movements. Un-

compromising Christianity became more and more inclined to asceticism which culminated in almost insane panegyrics of the virgin life. It made the men and women who came under its influence materially better than the society in which they lived; and this was acknowledged by the heathen themselves. It certainly delivered many from the terrors of superstition which tormented the pagan world, the constant fear of demonic influence, the belief that men were under inexorable destiny and could never escape the miseries in store for them. It did much to alleviate the condition of the slave by giving him new motives for self-respect as a free man in Christ. It encouraged serenity of temper and made cheerfulness a positive virtue. Above all it made its converts not only charitable in giving to the poor, but in actually alleviating distress, and the courage and self-devotion of Christians in times of pestilence was conspicuous. Thus to transform the ingrained selfishness of paganism was indeed a miracle.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISCIPLINE OF CHRISTIANITY

Theory of Baptism

It is interesting to observe in the New Testament the conflict between theory and practice in the Christian Church. To the great teachers the Gospel meant liberty and salvation for all. The domination of the Law was at an end and through faith in Christ all were free. Moreover all who were His had already won salvation. The life to come had begun on this earth so far as they were concerned; for they were dead to sin and alive to righteousness (Rom. vi, 11). They were kept by the power of God from Satan and sinned no more, and the Wicked One touched them not (I John v, 18). Baptism meant burial and resurrection to the new life of Christ (Rom. vi, 4; Col. ii, 12).

Practical difficulties demanded a revision. Discipline indispensable

This theory, however, was not confirmed by experience. Baptised Christians sinned at times openly and grievously and some made their liberty "a cloak for maliciousness" (I Pet. ii, 16). There were grave scandals at Corinth and elsewhere; and it became evident that there must be some sort of discipline. We find Paul insisting strongly on moral duties and the obligations of society almost in the same breath as he proclaims that law is the revelation of sin, and that "there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but

after the spirit" (Rom. viii, 1).[1] A Christian ethical system had for his Gentile converts to take the place of the Jewish. In theory they had entered upon a liberty for which they were in fact unfitted. The Church of Corinth is ordered to assemble, take cognisance, and punish an offender in order that he may be saved "in the day of the Lord," by the discipline implied in his being delivered over to Satan, whatever this may mean (I Cor. v, 5). It is the same with John. Not only is it admitted that believers may sin but a distinction is made between sins "unto death" and "those not unto death." (I John v, 16-17.)

New Testament the basis of the moral Law of the Church

In this way the New Testament came to contain not merely exhortations to live in the new spirit of liberty and love, but injunctions of a positive character which form the basis of the moral law of the Church. Jesus is not presented as a legislator, but He lays down a very definite law in the matter of divorce. So severe is He in regard to the obligation of the marriage bond, that His disciples are amazed at the positiveness of His command.[2] Both the Petrine and the Pauline Epistles insist on the necessity of all Christians yielding obedience to the established government; and in this they follow the teaching of the Gospel (Rom. xiii, 1 *ff;* I Peter ii, 13). The family relations, the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves, are ordered to be observed. In his earliest letter to the Church of Thessalonica, possibly only a few weeks after its foundation, Paul enjoins obedience to the rulers of the new Christian community, and seems determined to prevent the scandal

[1] The text is the received one. The words "who walk," *ad fin.*, are not the best manuscripts.

[2] Matt. xix, 10. "If the case of a man be so with his wife it is good not to marry."

of pious idlers living on the charity of the faithful. A Christian must work if he would eat. (II Thess. iii, 10.) The Epistles attributed to Peter and James are manuals of Christian ethics, based to a great extent on the Wisdom literature—both Hebrew and Greek—of the Old Testament. The Pastoral Epistles are, whether the work of Paul or not, the basis of the Canon Law of the Church, as it is recognised in the later literature of the books of Church order.

Attraction of the Christian community

The *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* and the *Epistle* of Barnabas distinguished between the Two Ways, the Christian of Life, and the Heathen of Death. In the *Teaching,* the Christian community is warned against impostors who profess to be apostles or prophets; and provision is made for assuring that it shall be simple and industrious. There is a saying of the Lord's in response to Peter's question, "Behold we have left all—what shall we have?" that His followers would find, "fathers and mothers, *etc.,* with persecution." This was fulfilled in the Church. Those who entered it found a community bound together by the closest ties of affection. The mutual love of Christians won the admiration of the outside world. To be a Christian meant the enjoyment of many advantages. The brethren cared for one another in sickness and poverty, the aged were provided for, employment was found for those who had abandoned their callings from religious scruples. The days of persecution drew the faithful very close together. Thus apart from the great spiritual benefits offered by the Church, there were other inducements to remain within the pale. To be driven out of a society so affectionate, so tenderly com-

passionate, was dreaded by all who appreciated its benefits. Therefore the Christian body preserved a power of discipline.

Expulsion the penalty of disobedience to the moral law

Expulsion was in truth a serious penalty. Outside the Church there was no hope of salvation, and the offender lost the support of those who had been his devoted friends. To be as "the heathen and the publican" to his former colleague was terrible indeed, involving as it did temporal deprivation, and loss of future salvation. In this way order was effectually maintained; for it was no easy thing to regain the privileges lost by misconduct. This therefore was the basis of the whole disciplinary system of the Church. To the heathen the door was always open, to those under instruction there was a chance for penitence; but once baptism had been given the fact that a man had proved unworthy of his profession was fatal. To a fully accepted Christian apostasy meant final exclusion. The absolute purity of the Church was of more importance than mercy to the sinner, and it must be remembered that expulsion from the Church in one place meant loss of Christian privileges everywhere, because it was impossible to be recognised without the recommendation of the Church of which one was a member. At an early date it appears that the organisation of the Christian world community was efficient.

The Church an army. Desertion unpardonable

The Church early regarded itself as an army at war with the world, and its members soldiers. Military phraseology was soon adopted: the words *militia, statio, sacramentum* were adopted by the Christians. A persecution meant a campaign. To deny Christ was like deserting in the face of the enemy. Apostasy was consequently

the greatest of sins. Next came murder and fornication, and these were so closely connected with apostasy that to be guilty of them was to become involved in the sin of formally rejecting Christ. Thus the Christian was unable to join in much of the life around for fear of being involved in these sins. He could not be a magistrate because he might have to recognise the state religion; attendance at the games, especially if there were gladiators, made him a murderer; theatrical displays encouraged fornication, both games and theatres were idolatrous. No Christian might engage in any trade which encouraged idolatry. But the stricter the law, the more exceptions were allowed. A distinction of guilt was admitted. Thus a man might accept an office which involved idolatry, and escape the full penalty of apostasy by appointing a deputy to act for him and so on. Of secret sins the Church does not appear to have taken cognisance, nor does it appear that till the days of monasticism the sins of the heart were classified and discussed. The seven deadly sins, for example, are now, not simple acts, but passions leading to sins. These did not come under the notice of the primitive disciplinarian.

One repentance after Baptism allowed

That penance could atone for post-baptismal sin was at first unknown. Baptism was regarded as a great act of repentance which resulted in free and full forgiveness of all sins. All who entered the Church were saved; unless they deliberately returned to the state from which they had been delivered. That anyone should do so was a matter for sorrow and astonishment. But John had said there is a sin unto death; the Epistle to the Hebrews had declared that some could not be renewed unto repentance (Heb. vi, 4-6); and even Christ had spoken of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit for which there is no forgiveness

in this world or the world to come (Matt. xii, 32; Mk. iii, 29). It was a fundamental principle that baptism could never be repeated. Could there, therefore, be a repetition of the repentance which baptism demanded?

The "Shepherd" of Hermas

The question is discussed in the series of visions known as the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Hermas was the brother of Pope Pius. He had been a slave and was at the time of his vision a small tradesman in Rome. His wife and family gave him some trouble; apparently he had not ruled his household well. Though famous for his chaste life, he reproached himself with having momentarily indulged in impure thoughts and his sensitive conscience accused him of certain dishonesty in the conduct of his business. Among those whom he saw in his vision was the angel of repentance. He was assured by him that God in His mercy would grant one—but only one—chance more to those who sinned after baptism: in other words that the grace of baptism could be renewed once. In this way penance became a kind of third sacrament. It is not specified by Hermas what sort of sins could be remitted: probably apostasy could not, but, whether the one repentance was allowed to people whose conscience was troubled and felt that they had lost the purity which they had gained at baptism, or whether it was to be given to offenders whose conduct had caused grave scandal, must remain in doubt.

Acts of Penance

Nothing is said about the performance of penance or of the authority by which it was inflicted. Paul had advised the Corinthians to hold a meeting of the church and to deliver the offenders over to Satan (I Cor. v, 5). But, later, the bishop, not the congregation, was afterwards

the judge. The difficulty always is that in depicting Church life the documents are, as a rule, late, and it is left to conjecture to decide how far they can be trusted to describe more ancient practices. It is not known when repentance began to be merited by prescribed acts of penance, or when formal acts of readmission to communion were introduced. The necessities of an age of persecution seem to have made the bishop practically the sole judge of each community as may be seen from the fact that Ignatius and Cyprian, the two most strenuous upholders of episcopal authority, were both martyrs.

The bishop the head of the Christian army

Persecution was war, and as in all war the need of a single mind to direct operation is obvious, and it must not be forgotten that every bishop had been solemnly elected or at least formally accepted by his flock as worthy of their confidence. He was literally the general of a Christian army which to succeed must be disciplined and obedient to orders. To us it may appear strange that the keynotes of letters, written by a man on his way to death, should be "Obey the bishop," do nothing without him. We are disposed to wonder at anyone being so anxious to maintain the dignity of his office when he had only a few days to live. But on consideration, the zeal of the Ignatius letters for episcopacy cannot reasonably be used to disparage the character of the martyr, as though he regarded the faith for which he was anxious to die as centred in an ecclesiastical organisation. Nor can the language employed furnish an argument against the genuineness of the letters. To save the Church Christians must maintain a united front and this could not be done unless they remained in communion with one another, and this could only be by rigid obedience to their chosen authorities. It is the same under very different circum-

stances with Cyprian. Persecution was causing division which could only be healed by recognising the bishop's right to lead. Hence the bishop is to Ignatius in the place of the Lord, and to Cyprian he is the high priest. It appears that the chief object of what discipline there was in the earliest Church was to keep it free from reproach and to guide it in days of persecution. This would account for much of the primitive severity, the unwillingness to allow sinners who had disgraced the Church pardon under any term.

Heretics a different class of offenders

But there were other offenders whose turpitude was not moral, but none the less serious. The function of the Church was to keep the faith pure and uncorrupted. The bishop was considered the custodian of the tradition of his Church—often he alone was allowed to preach. He was bound carefully to prevent the introduction of any new doctrine and to cut off any false teacher from communion with the Church. He was expected to warn other bishops of the appearance of a false teacher so that they might be on their guard. Thus according to one version the heretic Marcion was expelled from his church of Sinope and came to Rome, where he sought recognition in vain. The Montanists seem to have been favourably received by Victor of Rome, till Praxeas came from Asia and explained that their doctrines had been condemned by the bishop. Heretics seem to have been received back on renouncing their erroneous opinion. The great question in the third century was whether the baptism they had received outside the Church was valid. They naturally hoped that it would be pronounced invalid for then they could be properly baptised and receive all the benefit of the salvation which baptism ensured. Cyprian and his friends held that no sacrament outside the Church was

valid. The Roman Pope Stephen took the view that all baptism in the name of the Trinity must be acknowledged. To accuse Cyprian of lack of charity in this matter as though he resembled a catholic who denied the validity of the acts of a protestant minister is to mistake the entire situation. It was no question of courtesy to a rival Church. Cyprian in this instance was for lenity in giving the penitent heretic the chance of a pardon of sin, which neither he nor the Christian authorities believed to have been valid outside the Church. Both Pope Stephen and Cyprian would have agreed that *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.*

Education as discipline

One more species of discipline deserves our attention, that of education. The humblest Christian had to be a theologian in so far that he must know the cause for which he might be called upon to die. At first, as we see in the New Testament, the convert was baptised directly he confessed Jesus. Gradually a system of instruction was introduced and the candidate only reached the full initiation of baptism after careful preparation as a catechumen. He was gradually introduced to the principles of the faith. His studies were in Christian morality and the Old Testament; he was allowed to attend part of the service but not the celebration of the Eucharist. The more mysterious doctrines were withheld. Only just before baptism was the formula of the rite, the name of the Trinity revealed. The course varied greatly; for the simple it was easy, but the educated, notably at Alexandria, were trained by the great masters of the Catechetical School. Only the baptised however were allowed a full knowledge of the doctrine of the Church. The Creed was for the initiated alone.

Obscure as is the subject of primitive discipline, the

Church it may certainly be said, kept its members organised and trained them in the work which they had to do; so thoroughly that it was able to withstand all the calamities of the early persecutions and the trials and disasters of the empire after the days of persecution had long ceased. The Church saved the civilisation of western Europe by becoming one body, whose members had been trained both to enforce and to obey its laws.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH AS A SYSTEM OF BELIEF

First preaching of Jesus as the Risen Lord

The idea that Christianity was originally a simple religion full of amiability and benevolence, and lacking in definiteness and severity, is dissipated upon examination of the earliest records. What these are it is not easy to determine. Yet it is safe to say that the most primitive form of Christian teaching is not the record of the works and words of the Founder in the form in which we have received them. It is a remarkable testimony to the historical instinct of the author of the Third Gospel and Acts that the earliest preaching of Jesus after the Resurrection in Acts is quite different from what might be expected from the perusal of the Gospel. The Jesus of this Gospel, because of His humanity, is ever attractive—even more than in the two other Synoptists. His sayings have a naturalness and charm which are all His own; even His miracles are wrought in characteristic fashion. But in Acts the speeches about Jesus are formal and almost theological; and had we this book alone we could never have imagined the Jesus of Luke and the Synoptists.[1] Despite this it cannot be doubted that Luke and Acts are companion treatises by the same hand; and it would ap-

[1] It is noteworthy that in the Acts or in the Epistles hardly any stress is laid on the ministry, miracles, words, or acts of Jesus. The preaching is the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ and their dogmatic value. It is the same with the Christian creeds which go straight from the Birth to the Passion. The exceptions to this in the New Testament are Acts x, 38; Acts xx, 35; II Cor. x, 1, and the Epistle of James.

pear that, though the authorship were the same, the sources were different. The question being which is the older, the portrait of Jesus on earth or the earliest preaching of Him as Messiah. It seems more probable that those who witnessed the triumph of Jesus over death by the Resurrection should at first be more impressed with the wonder of His Messiahship being thus miraculously established, than inclined to reminiscence of His words and acts during the ministry. "The Lord is risen indeed," and is proclaimed the Christ of God must have been their first idea, and their earliest message. And thus in the Church the divine aspect of the Master preceded the human.

Little early interest in the human side of Christ

Christianity, as the word implies, is centred in Jesus as the Christ; and His disciples accepted and gloried in the name of Christian in this sense. Yet, as Jews, they were strongly convinced of the unity of God; and, as the Epistle of James shows, their creed was virtually expressed, the belief that God is one. (James ii, 19.) At the same time they had but little apparent interest in the human side of the ministry of Jesus, to which there is no allusion in Acts save in Chapter x, in which He is spoken of as a benefactor to the human race (Euergetit) who went about doing good. In the letters of Paul, the earliest writings, it is much the same. Christ to the most primitive age of the Church is the expected Deliverer of Israel, the Saviour and Judge, who was to come in glory from His place in heaven, where Stephen saw Him standing at the right hand of God. The fact that the Synoptic picture of Jesus on earth should have been preserved is truly remarkable, especially when it is considered how little impression it made in the Christian literature of the first centuries.

Christ never represented in the New Testament as no more than man

In the Pauline Epistles Christ is presented in a threefold aspect. In Thessalonians and I Corinthians xv He is the coming Judge, who will raise the dead and save His own people. In Galatians, Romans, and II Corinthians He is the Saviour of all who have faith in Him, and relieves those He has saved from the burthen of the Law. In the late Epistles He is above all the heavenly powers, the first born of all creation, by whom God made the worlds. It is much the same in the Epistle to the Hebrews. By the end of the Apostolic Age in the Fourth Gospel Jesus becomes the Word of God, Who is God, and the only means by which God can be known. To have seen Him is to have seen the Father. This is the basis of all subsequent Christian theology. The Fourth Gospel is the logical outcome of the first preaching about Jesus in Acts, and the main theme of the Gospel according to Mark is that He is the expected Messiah and Son of God. Although, therefore, the first preaching of Jesus as the Christ in no way conflicted with Jewish monotheism, nevertheless there is no sign of His being regarded after the Resurrection as a purely human figure, a normal man, only distinguished from other prophets by being more richly endowed with the Spirit of God.

Difference of meaning of the word "God" to a Jew and Gentile

The Gentile believer was unhampered by the Jewish monotheistic Creed, which refused the name of God to any but the Almighty. To him there was nothing abnormal in a man becoming a God, or in his becoming one himself. Indeed the word was used, as it is by us, in two different senses, and this is the great difficulty in discuss-

ing the Divinity of Jesus. Two people may agree in admitting that He is God, and yet mean something totally different, according as whether they use the word in what may be called its Jewish, or its Gentile sense. This will constantly meet the student of the early Christology of the Church, and it is the same to the present day. The question "Was Jesus Christ regarded as God?" can be answered without hesitation in the affirmative. To the more important one "In what sense was He so regarded?" it is impossible to reply without detailed explanation. The three aspects of Christian speculation may be described as Theology, Christology, and Soteriology. By Theology is meant the knowledge of God, and of all that is proper to divinity. Christology deals with the relation of Jesus Christ both to God and man. Soteriology is concerned with man's relation to God, and with the problem of how he can be reconciled to the Maker, and be "saved" in this world and the world to come, or in both.

"God" as conceived in Pagan and Jewish thought

To the pagan, the philosopher, and the Jew God was conceived in different aspects. To the pagan "God" meant Divinity much as "Man" means Humanity. As humanity is manifested in many men, so divinity is revealed in many gods; and as there are good and bad men, so are there good and bad gods. This finds expression in polytheism. To the philosopher God is an abstraction; His nature may be shared by many, or it may be unique. But it is different from anything man can conceive. But it is something which cannot be expressed in terms. It is the Unknown, belonging neither to time nor space. To the Jew God is essentially One; His chief attributes are power and goodness, He has therefore both attributes and personality. He is unlike man, because of His perfection, or infinite

superiority; but can be thought of in human terms; He can be angry or pleased; He can be appeased, but He can never err.

Jewish thinkers compelled to borrow from Gentile philosophy

These theories about God are far from being mutually exclusive, and can be held simultaneously. Even the Jew was often, unconsciously it may be, a polytheist, only he termed the spiritual beings, whom he feared if he did not worship, angels or demons. Jewish philosophy tended also to depersonalise God and regard Him as an abstraction, unknowable by man and mediated by some secondary agency, His Wisdom or His Word. The philosopher might speculate about God as the Idea of Ideas, but in his piety he was anthropomorphic, and in his superstition polytheistic. It was much the same with the early believers. As regards God, and the teaching of Jesus, Paul, and John was not speculative, but eminently practical. They assumed that the God whom Israel had long served had made known His will; and the chief feature of their theology seems to have been that God desired to be in personal relationship, not only to Israel, but to all who served Him. Jesus certainly did not proclaim the Fatherhood of God as a new revelation. The idea was familiar to all His hearers—but He vitalised it as no other teacher had hitherto done. The distinctive Christian doctrine about God was that He was no abstraction: that He could be approached, that He possessed the human attributes of love, justice, compassion, etc.,—all this was Jewish—but in addition that He could only be known through His Word or Spirit, in other words through His Son Jesus Christ. None the less, when the Christian was forced into specu-

lation he was compelled to adopt the language and even the theories of contemporary philosophy whether Jewish or heathen.

Development of Christology

The practical piety as well as the philosophy of the Church led to a Christology, or doctrine of the person of Jesus, and of His relation to God. But the Christians did not have recourse to philosophy to develop a system of thought, but to explain the conclusion to which their piety had led them. The position of the early Christian was this: If he were a Jew, he had been trained to believe that the essential of true religion was to worship one God; if he had been converted as a Gentile, he had learned that at all costs he must avoid man worship in any form. He must choose death rather than acknowledge Cæsar to be a god. But the passionate love and firm trust in Jesus made all His followers desire to worship Him, and they were taught that in time of persecution they must, on the one hand, refuse to sacrifice to the genius of the emperor, and on the other, never blaspheme Christ. As has been indicated, they paid little attention to the human life of Jesus: their real interest in Him was as the Son of God, their Saviour, and the coming Judge of the world. True they rejected the Gnostic teaching that the Son of God had not come in the flesh but was a mere phantom (docetism); but the importance of the fact was due to their belief that Jesus was the Saviour, not only of the immortal spirit, but also of the flesh; and if he did not come in a human body, how could our bodies rise to immortality through Him? The divinity of Christ therefore was from the earliest days an all important doctrine. But how was this to be interpreted and the Unity of God maintained?

How Jesus came to be regarded as the Word

The Alexandrian Jews had partly provided an answer. To save the spiritual conception of God, and, at the same time, to conserve His personal relationship to man and creation in general, they had developed the conception of His wisdom or Word, which they had practically personified. Christian piety identified this with their Master. God by His wisdom made the world, this wisdom is His Word (*Logos* = speech or reason). Ever since time was, the Word of God has been in operation. He it is who spake to the prophets of old. He also taught the Gentiles whatever in their philosophy is true. All the wisdom which was in the world whether manifested in the human mind or in the orderly movements of the planets and throughout the universe was due to the divine Word. Once the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel declared that this Word was made flesh and dwelt among us in the only begotten of the Father, and that this was Jesus Christ, the basis of Christology was laid on firm foundation. Jesus was to His followers the eternal pre-existent Word. It is doubtful if the Synoptic portrait of Him could ever have been made, when this was fully realised. For a long time, however, the Christology was crude and at times contradictory, and it took many generations to bring it into severe logical form.

Free will and determinism

But how did Christ save man? This is the problem of soteriology. It is a strange fact that though the teaching of Paul is frankly predestinarian, and that this is implied in some of the words of Jesus Himself, early Christianity seems to have been consistently on the side of free will as opposed to determinism. There were the two *Ways*, of *Life*, and of *Death*, and the choice was open. This was but natural when it is remembered that the whole

tendency of the Gentile world was towards the belief in the inevitable destiny of every man being dependent on planetary influences. In arguments between Christians and Greeks the question of free will was bound to appear.

Little interest in certain topics, important later

The means of redemption from sin were not often a subject for discussion. This was to be looked for, as all who submitted to baptism were justified thereby; and, so far as the Christian was concerned, his redemption was a thing of the past. Salvation was, in truth, sacramental. The spirit was saved in baptism and the flesh by participation in the Eucharist. The cross was a sign of triumph and the power which put the demons to flight. It is remarkable how little interest was taken in many things which aroused furious controversy in later days, such as justification, grace, sanctification and the like; and even the writings of Paul failed to draw much attention to these topics before Augustine.

Millennarianism

On the other hand the deepest interest was felt in the future world. The last day was believed to be near and the question was whether this would not usher in an earthly millennium in which Christ would rule His people for a thousand years. The Church was divided on the subject of the predictions in the book of Revelation, the less instructed being on the side of literal interpretation, whilst the educated Christians favoured softening the words of the seer by allegorising them. Millennarianism could boast the support of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, whose association with apostolic men enhanced the authority of his opinions. In the third century it was the cause of the famous critical verdict of Dionysius of Alexandria that the Gospel and Apocalypse of John were

not by the same hand. It was supported by a discussion of the phraseology of the two books, thoroughly modern in tone.

The future world

The question of punishment and reward in the next world is perplexing, because we cannot say positively in what sense death is meant. It would be easy to say what became of all outside the Church in later time. They went to hell; and there was an end of it. But was it the primitive doctrine that all men were immortal, and that the only way to escape not merely annihilation but hell was through baptism? The vivid portrayal of the torments of the damned is found in Gnostic or Apocryphal rather than in orthodox sources. The point at issue is this: Did primitive Christianity preach the terrors of hell fire for all eternity as the only alternative to accepting the Gospel, as was done in later times, or did it content itself with holding out hopes of a glorious salvation in Christ? In other words, when did the belief that the soul was naturally immortal become an established doctrine? The idea that all souls would in the end be saved by the redemptive work of Christ, was not in primitive Christianity condemned as heresy.

The Holy Spirit

Hitherto nothing has been said of the Third Person in the Godhead, without whom the doctrine of the Trinity could not have come into being. The Holy Spirit has been more necessary to Christian dogma than to piety, because of the difficulty of really discriminating between the part of Christ in salvation, and that of the Spirit. Even the promise of sending the Comforter to abide with His disciples for ever is not very different from the one "Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the

world." For the present it is sufficient to draw attention to the difference between the Jewish and Christian views of the Spirit.

In the Old Testament a man was possessed by a spirit. He became the instrument by which it acted. God's Spirit caused a man to prophesy, to run before the chariot of the king hastening to Jezreel, to slay Philistines, or carry the gates of a city. When the prophet announced his message, he did not speak in his own name. The formula, "Thus saith the Lord," meant that God, and not the prophet, was actually speaking. The evil spirits, not those whom they possessed, proclaimed Jesus the Son of God, and Paul and Silas, servants of the Most High God. A madman is revered in the East because of the spirit which makes him not himself. But the Spirit, possibly in the Third Gospel and certainly in the Pauline letters, is a personal influence changing the nature and transforming the character. The Spirit of Jesus raises us from death to life. His fruits are "Love, joy, peace," all the graces of the Christian character. In this way the Spirit becomes the means by which God works in the heart.

Early doctrine of the Trinity vague

A difficulty, surprising to us till we see the reason, arose as to the gender of the Holy Spirit, which is masculine in Latin, neuter in Greek, but feminine in Aramæan. Thus in one Gospel the Spirit appears as the mother of Jesus and in the Apostolical Constitutions the bishop represents the Father, the deacon the Son, and the deaconess the Holy Ghost. This shows the vagueness of the early doctrine of the Trinity which appears in its most ancient form in the baptismal formula in Matt. xxviii, 19, though the word is found in no patristic writer before A.D. 180 in Theophilus of Antioch.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIANITY AND THE GNOSIS

Christianity was a practical, not a speculative religion. It held out the hope of a glorious future to those who believed in Jesus as the Christ, and obeyed His laws. But many who embraced, or at least were interested in the new religion, brought their own prejudices and presuppositions to explain it. The result was what is called Gnosticism.

The Gnosis

The Gnostic was a man possessed of *Gnosis,* or knowledge. This does not mean that he claimed to be better educated or more intellectual than others; but that he had deeper spiritual perceptions. He had penetrated the secret of the universe, and, if a Christian, he interpreted the revelation accordingly. For the Gnosis was not primarily Christian. It may be defined as an attitude of mind towards many religions. After all, the outward manifestation of religion in ceremonies, myth, and creed, is but a crude attempt to express the deeper feelings of men towards the Unseen; and these naturally vary with the spiritual condition of the individual. The Gnosis professed to be the highest expression of the knowledge of those to whom the whole truth had been vouchsafed.

The term Gnostic was lavishly employed by Christian writers. It is applied to arrant impostors, who impressed their dupes by magic and fraud, as well as to profound thinkers, who tried to solve problems of the greatest in-

terest, and it was adopted by the true believer, who saw below the surface of Christian literalism. In one sense Gnosticism was a phase which by the third century had passed away; in another it is so permanent among men that it may be said that it never can be traced to any beginning, and its end can never be predicted. A great deal of the most modern manifestations of religion are only the old Gnosticism in a new guise.

Comparative religion

Christianity appeared and was being diffused at a time when men were interested in what is now known as comparative religion. Writers discoursed on the nature of the gods and the origin of the myths concerning them. New religions were eagerly studied, and adopted, and mystery religions were becoming widespread. Magic was universally believed in; and, as the name implies, was traced to the East. Even the religious beliefs and practices in India were studied. Those of Egypt were subjects of intense curiosity. The simple fact that both Strabo and Pliny, the Elder, mention the Essenes is proof that even an obscure sect of Jews did not escape notice. No wonder therefore that efforts were made to combine Christianity with other systems and philosophies.

The Timaeus

The Gnosis had existed before Christianity, and its principles are to be found in the *Timaeus* of Plato which is an excellent introduction to the subject. According to Plato there are two worlds. The one around us, consisting of sensible objects, is but a shadow of the other, which is the world of essential forms (*ideas*), which are immaterial. The ideas belong to the *real* world, and all visible objects are partial revelations of unseen actualities. Thus, what is material is but a type: the idea itself is the ulti-

mate reality. The world we see is the work of a creator or *Demiurge* who fashioned the things seen on the model of the unseen. In studying a Gnostic system we meet constantly with personified abstractions called Æons (ages, eternities), Christ, the Church, Truth, Light, Wisdom. These come forth, often in pairs, male and female, and play their parts, they generate other Æons, and their adventures seem like a weird mythology. It is only when a clue is in our hands that it is at all intelligible even to the initiated. At first sight, Gnosticism appears little better than a tissue of absurdities. Nevertheless some of its great exponents were evidently no mean philosophers. We are, however, under the disadvantage of only having garbled reports of their systems. The dangers of the Gnostic spirit were perceived by two New Testament writers; and warnings against it are discoverable in the later Pauline Epistles and in the Johannine literature.

Opponents of Gnosticism

Its influence in the first decade of the second century was sufficient for Ignatius on his way to martyrdom to make special allusion to it; and before the close of the century it caused Irenæus, in one of the most important productions of early Christianity, to devote his whole energies to refute Gnosticism in Rome. Clement of Alexandria, almost the contemporary of Irenæus, is our next authority, and from Carthage, Tertullian issued his fierce invectives against the Gnosis. Immediately afterwards Hippolytus produced his *Philosophumena*. Thus, in four of the greatest centres of Christian influence—Ignatius at Antioch, Irenæus, an Asiatic by birth and later a bishop in Gaul, at Rome, Clement at Alexandria, Tertullian at Carthage, devoted their energies in combating Gnosticism. To these may be added Hippolytus and Origen, whose sermons on the Gospel according to St.

John are in a measure an answer to the Gnostic commentary of Heracleon. In the farther East, Tatian and Bardaisan would have been honoured teachers, but that they were under suspicion of Gnosticism. Of the immense vitality of this spirit in later days we shall have abundant cause to speak hereafter. The last great Christian writer on Gnosticism is Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in Cyprus (d. 403). This erudite collector of all the heretical opinions which had distracted the Church till his day is often credulous, ill informed, and prejudiced; but his testimony cannot be ignored.

Gnostic writings

The Gnostic writings have not been allowed to survive; but here and there fragments have been preserved in the Church writers, and the popularity of the spurious Gospels and Acts enable us to know somewhat of their doctrines. The Clementine romances are really Gnostic, and so is the *Pistis Sophia,* a Valentinian treatise, which has been brought to light. The Gnostics have left their traces in amulets, charms, magical formulæ and gems; and, as will appear, in certain popular Christian ideas, whose parentage is often unrecognised.

Simon Magus

The first Gnostic, the father of all heresy, is said to have been Simon Magus, who appears as the convert of Philip in the Acts of the Apostles (viii, 9 *ff*) in a notice which gives but a slight idea of his subsequent importance.

Philip, one of the Seven, goes down to the "city of the Samaritans" and there finds that Simon, by his magic has astonished the people, who declare him to be the Great Power of God, or the Power of God which is called "Great." Simon believes, and is baptised. The apostles at Jerusalem, hearing that Samaria has received the word of God, send Peter and John to give the Holy Ghost to

the new converts. Simon seeing (obviously by the gifts bestowed) that the imposition of the hands of Peter and John gives miraculous power, offers money if they will give him the ability to transmit what he obviously regards as the magic of the Holy Spirit. Peter rebukes Simon and says "I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

Here is no heresy, but what is found elsewhere in Acts: heathen or semi-heathen magic in opposition to Christian spiritual power, as is seen in the stories of Paul and Elymas (Acts xiii, 6 *f*), and the sons of Sceva (Acts xix, 14). In Christian legend it is otherwise: there Simon Peter represents true doctrine and Simon Magus false. Yet it is to be borne in mind that in other legends, such as the Acts of Peter, the apostles and the magicians are rival wonder-workers. The story in the Acts of the Apostles finds an echo in the Christian tradition that Simon Magus went to Rome and was worshipped as a god. Here, however, it is necessary to dwell solely on what is said of the teaching of Simon in opposition to Christianity as taught by Peter.

Simon's heresy

We only know of the opinions of Simon from one source, the *Philosophumena* of Hippolytus, which is supported by a single remark of Theodoret (in the fifth century), that Simon had in his system six Æons; this is confirmed by Hippolytus. According to Simon the origin of all is fire, and the argument of his book, the *Great Announcement,* is to the effect that the Unbegotten Fire produced the Boundless Power who is potentially but not actually in six roots. These are Mind and Thought (*epinoia*), Voice and Name, Reason and Desire (*enthymesis*). These with Power, or "He who stood, stands, and will stand," make up the number seven.

The books of the Pentateuch and their titles signify the five senses; and the one river which became four streams in Paradise is explained physiologically. The Logos is stored up in the Tree of Life, where he is only potential, but may increase and become a boundless power. Hippolytus quotes at length from the *Megalê Apophasis* of Simon, and then goes on to relate the story found in the other Christian writers that the Thought (*epinoia* or *ennoia*) a female Æon, Simon's own counterpart—he being the Great Power—had long been imprisoned in the form of women of surpassing beauty, like Helen of Troy, and now dwelt in Helen of Tyre, who travelled as his companion having been "redeemed" by Simon when a prostitute. Hippolytus goes on further to say that Simon had been crucified, but only in appearance, in Judea as the Son, had been manifested as the Father in Samaria, and as the Holy Spirit elsewhere. His function was to save this world from the angels who ruled it. It is remarkable that Hippolytus here does not quote Simon's book in this account, nor does he give it as authority for the immoral teaching he attributes to him.

Were Simon of Acts, Simon the heretic and Simon the writer identical?

There is in truth nothing in Simon's words as here quoted that seems to have anything to do with Christianity. So far as it is intelligible, it is debased mixture of Ophitism and Platonism, justified by an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament. It is an open question whether the Simon of Acts, the Simon the magician who opposed Peter, and the Simon of the *Megalê Apophasis* are the same persons. What is important for us is that the system, as quoted by Hippolytus, is a pre-Christian or at any rate a non-Christian Gnosticism. There is the Unknown and remote First Cause, the emanations or

Æons, the World-ruling Angels, the redemption from this world of matter. In addition there are the charges of magic, and of gross immorality which are further developed later by the credulity of Epiphanius.

The Ophites

Most Gnostic systems are tiresomely alike with one or two great exceptions. Of the earliest sects the most interesting are the Naassenes, or Ophites, the first, according to Hippolytus, who took the name of Gnostics, though the other fathers say the followers of Simon Magus were the earliest to assume the title. If Hippolytus means that the Ophites were the first Christian sect to be thus styled, he is probably right; for they were undoubtedly Christian in assigning to Jesus Christ the highest place in their system, which follows the usual Gnostic scheme of a Great Unknown Principle and a series of worlds, the lowest of which is our material universe. The distinctive characteristics of Ophitism are the reverence for the Serpent and the doctrine that this world is ruled by a positively evil being called Ialdabaoth. The Serpent comes probably from Asia Minor, where every temple is said to have had its serpent deity. He is the virtuous offspring of Ialdabaoth, and saves man by inducing him to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All peoples, according to Ophite hymns quoted by Hippolytus, worshipped the one God under different names. The rituals were elaborate, and savoured much of heathenism; but it is notable that in all the Gnostic systems, even if in a perverted form, the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist are recognised. The Ophites had a most elaborate system of directions for the soul after death as it passed through the seven heavens, and diagrams to guide its progress were designed. Celsus, the great anti-Christian writer about A.D. 170, alludes to

this Ophite *Book of the Dead,* and Origen, answering him before the middle of the third century, says that by his time the Ophites had become a very obscure sect. Epiphanius has preserved extracts from the Gospel of Philip, which they used. They were certainly an ancient sect, and soon ceased to justify their name of Naassenes or Ophites by making the Serpent less and less prominent in their doctrines.

The power of evil

But the enduring element in Ophitism was that the Serpent, who was identified with Satan, was really the benefactor of humanity. The God of this world was a jealous, vindictive being, who, under the guise of law, desired to hold man in subjection by keeping him in ignorance. His rival, the Serpent or Satan, restored him to liberty. Hence what was called good is really evil; and evil is good. This revolt against convention, morality, law, continually took different forms under varying circumstances; but it is fundamentally the same whether in early or later times. It gives expression to the eternal protest of the human mind against the rule by which discipline is maintained, whether in the natural, social, or spiritual order of the world. It is a perpetual revolt against the Hebrew element in Christianity, in so far as it upholds the basic doctrine of the Law and the Prophets that the true God requires above all things right conduct on the part of those who profess to do Him service.

Why the Church could not accept Gnosticism

This, and other Gnostic philosophies, aimed at assimilating Christianity to the religions around. Against this tendency the Church struggled desperately though not always with success. It was the same contest under a different form that was being waged against the Roman Empire. The price of toleration was that the Church

should acknowledge the divinity of Cæsar and accept the existing order. The other religions made a similar offer. Let the Church recognise that all really worshipped one God under different names, and adapt some of the practices of the age, and it might form a nucleus for a universal religion. But the Church would not abandon its unique position. It stood for absolute truth, and its message to the world was open to all men and could not be changed. For the Christians possessed two things: a faith once delivered to the saints, and a promise of salvation for all. It could not be untrue to its sacred deposit of the truth, nor could it offer a salvation open only to a few enlightened intelligences. Its message was clear, not esoteric, and addressed to a select few. To a certain extent the Church stood firm. But it will be abundantly evident on further consideration that the Church yielded ground quite unconsciously and adapted both its beliefs and practices to changed conditions. Before this, however, a further consideration of Gnosticism is necessary, and of how the triumph of the Church over this formidable adversary was achieved.

An examination of the best Gnostic teachers will reveal how each system is an attempt to carry to its extreme logical conclusion each of the three great strands of Christian doctrine in the New Testament, represented by the names of John, Paul, and James. It may be by chance: but the apostolic opponent of the teaching is always Peter, who stands for catholic Christianity.

The Gnostics perverted the Faith; but at least they taught the Christians to think out their problems. They were the first biblical critics, commentators, hymn-writers, and, in a sense, theologians. They are accused of immoral doctrines and practices, but so were the members of the Church by their opponents. At any rate, Gnosticism is an important phase in the development of Christianity.

CHAPTER VII

THE GNOSTICS AND THE LEADING APOSTLES

Three types of Christianity

As the New Testament Canon was being completed various sides of Christianity began to appear; and three types of teachers stood forward pre-eminently—James, the Lord's brother, John the beloved disciple, and Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. James stands for Christianity as a form of Judaism; John for the Faith in its theological aspect; and Paul for the Church in contradistinction to the Synagogue. Each has his counterpart in Gnosticism, Jewish, theological, and anti-Judaising; and the representatives of these phases are Cerinthus, Valentinus, and Marcion. The two first named may be considered as founders of schools; but Marcion, who possessed somewhat of the constructive ability of St. Paul, organised a church.

James and Judaising Gnostics

According to Josephus the murder of James by the High Priest Ananus, just before the siege of Jerusalem, drew down the divine wrath upon the devoted city. Eusebius quotes Hegesippus' account of his extreme ritual purity and his devotion in the Temple. The Jews all recognised his holiness, and he was called "The Righteous" and "Oblias," meaning defence of the people. Some of the seven sects asked him, "What is the door of Jesus?" and he declared Jesus to be the Christ. But the rulers were alarmed because people began to expect Jesus to come as

the Christ, and begged James to stand on the pinnacle of the Temple and persuade them that they were mistaken. As he still preached Jesus, he was cast down, stoned, and finally killed by a fuller's club. Here we have a Christian leader highly honoured as a Jewish ascetic by his countrymen, who buried him near the Temple and set up a monument to him.

Judaism as a religion was naturally neither ascetic nor speculative; but the Jew could not escape the influence of the spirit of the age. He shared in its admiration for the discipline which delighted in tormenting the body, and in the interest taken in spiritual beings who acted as media between man and God. The Jewish philosophers indulged in an allegorism applied to Scripture which had been borrowed from the Greeks, and in theories about the divine Word or Wisdom; the common people hoped for a new world order and a national triumph, and in the meantime resorted to magic and sorcery. Thus, here were all the elements for Judaic Gnosticism among the converts to Christianity.

Distinctive features of Jewish Gnosticism

The creation of the world by angels, the celestial hierarchy, the remoteness of the Supreme Being, and His contact with the world through intermediaries are common to all Gnostic systems, whether they incline to Judaism or are Gentilic and anti-Jewish in origin. What is characteristic of Judaising Gnosticism is the idea that Jesus was a man, the greatest of the prophets, who at His baptism was adopted as the Son of God by the outpouring or descent of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, being, as has been already indicated, feminine in Aramaic, is in the Gospel of the Hebrews spoken of as "the Mother of Jesus," and thus we have a feminine element in the Trinity. This appears also in the oriental "Hymn of the Soul." In fact, nothing is

more noteworthy in all these Gnostic systems than the insistence, in some form or other, of the female side of Deity. This, it may be noted, is not, like the modern cultus of the Virgin, due to the desire for something motherly and compassionate. It seems rather that the female, as well as the male, must be represented in the generative power which produces Æons, however spiritually these are conceived. Judaic Gnosticism played an insignificant part in Christian development, unless the persistent heresy of Adoptionism be due to it.

Qualities personified in Fourth Gospel

In the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, and in the utterances put into the mouth of Jesus by John, qualities are in a sense personified. In the beginning was the *Word*. In Him *Life* came into being. *Life* is the *Light* of men. The *Light* shone in the *Darkness*. The *Light* came to His own things, but His own people did not receive Him: to such as believed in Him was given power to become sons of God. Of his *Fulness* we have all received *Grace*. The *Law* came by Moses, *Grace* and *Truth* by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time. The *Only Begotten* (*Monogenês*) who is in the bosom of the *Father* has declared Him. This *Word* became *Flesh* and we beheld his *Glory*. Out of this material, by means of a species of romance which may seem to us absolute nonsense, as it did to some of the fathers, but not to the most philosophical, a theological system was evolved. We have only a perverted form of it, but if we remember that this personification of abstract ideas does not represent them as a multitude of semi-pagan deities, but eternal realities (in the philosophic sense), it is not only beautiful but contains many sublime truths, not alien to the teaching of the most spiritual of the Gospels.

Valentinus

About the time of the philosophical Emperor Hadrian, a Christian philosopher named Valentinus arose in Egypt. That he was no pagan is admitted. Tertullian says he had hoped to be elected a bishop, but was rejected in favour of a man who had confessed Christ by his sufferings. He visited Rome and there gave his explanation of the teaching of John, in which are all the materials for a Gnostic scheme. A God unknown and unknowable save through his *Word*, a *Fulness* (or *Pleroma*) including the divine attributes *Life*, *Light*, *Grace*, *Truth*, and, as is afterwards declared, *Love*. These are opposed to *Darkness*, the type of *Evil*, and the Law, of Moses, as contrasted with *Grace*. The system of Valentinus is an explanation of this in an allegory.

System of Valentinus

The true God cannot be known *per se*. The essence of His Being is *Profundity* (*Bythus* = depth). Associated with Him is *Silence;* contained in Him are all the attributes of Godhead. These are classified in pairs, each consisting of a masculine quality with its feminine counterpart, the *Profundity* Himself having no consort, unless it be *Silence*. From Him emerge thirty eternal realities (*Æons*). These are divided into three groups of eight, ten, and twelve, called respectively the Ogdoad, Decad, and Dodecad. The lowest of these is *Sophia* or *Wisdom*. She is the youngest, and, unlike the others, is restless with a desire to know. In this thirst for more knowledge she is inferior to all her associates who are each contented with his or her place in the *Fulness*, or *Pleroma*. *Wisdom* seeks to find out God in his *Profundity*. She soars upward but cannot attain to her desire. Plunged in sorrow she produces a shapeless thing or abortion in the form of a *Lower Wisdom* which is called *Achamoth* (the Hebrew

Chokmah = wisdom). This being cannot be included in the *Fulness,* because she is inferior and not essentially perfect, as are all the thirty Æons. Thus *Wisdom* can still retain her place; her progeny cannot. Still the *Lower Wisdom* struggles upward, but a restraining influence appears in *Limitation* (*Horos* = boundary, or *Stauros* = the Cross), who keeps her out of the *Fulness.* Like *Wisdom,* her mother, *Achamoth* falls into despair and produces something inferior to herself. This is the *Creator* (Demiurgos) of material existence. In this way the visible universe with its seven heavens comes into being. The allegory explains the powerlessness of *Wisdom,* even in its highest form, to discover the great secret of Divine Perfection, the unrest and dissatisfaction which makes *Wisdom* in despair recede still further and further from God till we reach this evil material universe ruled by the abortion of an abortion of true *Wisdom.* The whole world we live in lieth in the Evil One, and a scheme of redemption becomes imperatively necessary, redemption being the restoration of everything to its proper place.

Jesus and redemption

The rash attempt of *Wisdom* to explore the Unknowable had produced confusion in the *Divine Fulness,* and for the restoration of peace two other *Eternities* were called into being. These were *Christ* and the *Holy Spirit,* male and female counterparts. The result of this harmony was an agreement that each Æon should in honour of the *Profundity* contribute of his best, the result being *Jesus,* the very star and the perfect fruit of all that is divine. *Christ* visited the *Lower Wisdom* and filled her with desire for Him before He returned to the *Fulness.* In this way, there are in mankind three elements derived from this *Lower Wisdom;* the spiritual, from her and Christ, the psychic, from her and the *Creator,* and the purely ma-

terial or carnal, under the *Prince of this world* (Cosmocrator). Mankind is divided into the same three classes; those capable of true enlightenment and the highest redemption belong to the first, the children of the *Creator* to the second, and the last, or carnal, to the third. The Incarnation was explained less as actual than it appeared. Christ was born of the Virgin, but passed through her like water does through a pipe; that is, He did not really partake of her. In a sense He shared in all three parts of human nature; but the higher of these in Him could endure no pain. His function is to enlighten those who are His and restore all. The *Lower Wisdom* will be raised and purified and given a place in the *Divine Fulness* as will all who are redeemed with her. The *Creator* and His servants will have salvation, but on a lower scale.

Not entirely unchristian

Such then is the theology of Valentinus; and in some respects its departure from that of the Church is not so great as might be supposed. The *Profundity,* for example, is not mere negation. He is Love. He produces the Æons because He must have objects for His love; "for he loveth not to be alone." The arguments are all based on the New Testament Scriptures. Heracleon, Valentinus' disciple, is the first Christian commentator.

Opponents of Valentinus

The heresy was, at the same time, regarded as a very formidable one. Irenæus' *Refutation* wastes no time in discussing the origin of heresy, but goes straight for that of Valentinus. He had special reason for so doing, for one of the followers of this error had been in Gaul, practising all the arts of an impostor in the magical rites he introduced into the celebration of the Eucharist. Tertullian and Hippolytus both devote special attention to Valentinus. But according to Irenæus there was an

Eastern and a Western form of the system; and in its native Egypt it was not so unfavourably regarded. Neither Clement nor Origen abuse Valentinus, and Origen in his homilies on St. John's Gospel discusses Heracleon's *Commentary* with respect. What he does object to is the aristocratic attitude of Gnosticism which provides one salvation for the enlightened, and another for less instructed Christians. But both he and Clement make the same distinction in the way they themselves impart the truths of religion.

The last prominent notice of Valentinianism is the destruction of one of its conventicles at the end of the fourth century by the bishop of Callinicum, aided by monks and a mob. Here Ambrose of Milan withstood Theodosius in a manner less to his credit than on the occasion of the massacre at Thessalonica.

Pistis Sophia

The *Pistis Sophia* (*Faith Wisdom*) is the surviving literary record of this heresy. It is preserved in a Coptic MS. in the British Museum and was translated into Latin by a young German scholar named Schwartze in 1850. The book is a strange medley. *Pistis Sophia* is the *Wisdom* of Valentinus; and Jesus, who remains eleven years with His disciples after the Resurrection, explains how He descended from heaven to redeem her. Part is occupied by many questions put to Jesus by Mary Magdalene, and part by so-called "Texts of the Saviour." There are vivid descriptions of heaven and the terrors of hell, and great stress is laid on the power of the Mysteries (Sacraments) to save souls.

Pauline Gnosticism

Paul is the greatest example of practical wisdom in the early history of the Church. His singularly alert and

comprehensive mind was devoted to one great idea of making the message he had from Jesus world wide. So great a salvation could not be for his own race only, but must be for all mankind; and consequently all barriers to the universal diffusion of the Gospel must be destroyed. At the same time, the Apostle felt intensely that his own conversion to the truth was due to an astonishing act of grace, and that he himself had been chosen for his work by God's fore-knowledge. For this reason Paul stood for determinism rather than for the freedom of the will, which the majority of Christians held to in opposition to the Gnostics, who, by dividing men as Paul had done into three classes, were in favour of predestination.

But in the early Church the writings of Paul were more admired than understood; and even where his opposition to the Law would have been most effective, Gnostics like Valentinus and the Ophites seem to have neglected his arguments; and their anti-Judaism was not Pauline. A contemporary of Valentinus was the first to make a serious attempt to interpret and bring to its logical conclusion the Pauline theology.

Marcion

Like Valentinus, Marcion was a member of the Church and like him is thought to have aspired to be a bishop. He was a native of Sinope, and by profession was a ship-owner. Tertullian opens his attack upon him by a fierce invective against the climate and inhabitants of his native land, declaring that it never produced anything more detestable than this heretic; but this must be taken not literally but as a forensic opening of the case against Marcion, and the rest of Tertullian's long refutation of his opinions show that they seemed to him worthy of serious consideration. The fact is, Marcion was a man of great originality and critical ability, and, unlike other

Gnostics, a follower of Christ who was as ready to die for Him as any of the orthodox.

Marcion's system has many features common to Gnosticism—a God remote from Creation, an inferior God as world-ruler and God of the Jews, a Christ not truly incarnate but suffering in appearance only (docetic), one redemption for the spiritual, another for the merely physical believers. His originality is displayed in his characterisation of (a) the Unknown God, (b) the Creator and the Mosaic Law, (c) his criticism of the New Testament. His book is called the *Antithesis* (contrasts) in which the God revealed by Moses is shown in opposition to the God of Jesus Christ.

(a) His Unknown God is more Christian than Gnostic. He is not entirely remote and unknowable. He has nothing to do, it is true, with the material world; but He is actively loving, and sends His Son to save and enlighten us. Marcion's God is emphatically love.

(b) The God of this world is not Satan, nor Ialdabaoth, nor any evil being. He is just rather than loving, the sort of character we often meet, which compels respect without inspiring affection. Inflexibly just, he errs through want of discrimination, and prefers the cautiously pious Jacob to the generous Esau. His favourites refuse the salvation offered by the true Christ (for Marcion taught that the Unknown would have one Christ and the Creator the other), being satisfied with their own eminently respectable heaven. In his estimate of the Law, Marcion follows Jesus rather than Paul. To our Lord, the Law is an imperfect morality. "Moses for the hardness of your heart wrote you this commandment." To Paul it is holy, just, and good, but impotent to save. To Marcion it is just but unloving. It is easier to sympathise with the insight of the heretic, than the arguments of the apostle in support of a noble cause.

(c) Marcion rejected the Old Testament as a work inspired by an inferior God; and of the New he accepted only parts of St. Luke's Gospel, and the Pauline Epistles. His criticism is at times discriminating, but many of his alterations were made because the words of the Scripture were in conflict with his views.

Valentinus was the most poetical, Marcion the most keen sighted, of the Gnostics. Our next task is to see why and how their views needed to be refuted by the rising Catholic Church.

CHAPTER VIII

THE REPLY OF THE CHURCH TO GNOSTICISM

Why Gnosticism failed

Justice has, it is to be hoped, been done to the attractive side of Gnosticism. It must, however, be borne in mind that, had its teachers succeeded, the energy of the Church would have been dissipated in numberless short-lived philosophical sects. Æons, emanations, and theories about angelic hierarchies could not, conjoined with magical arts and pretended revelations of the world beyond the grave, make a world-conquering religion; and Christianity had to live, not in the philosophic atmosphere of the second century, but through ruder days of darkness and ignorance. To survive, the Church had to become a disciplined organisation held firmly together and insisting on its laws being observed by its members. It could not be a school of philosophy, enjoying academic freedom. It must live by holding to its principles of authority, and by insistence on its laws of morality; for it is to be observed that when the Christians yielded so far to the Gnostic spirit and became philosophers, the moral force of the Church was weakened, as it was in the fourth and fifth centuries and in the palmy days of Scholasticism. Tertullian has been perhaps unjustly blamed for asking "What has philosophy to do with the Church?"

Paul hints at Gnosticism

Whether Paul, in his later epistles, especially to the Colossians, attacks any form of Gnosticism is an open

question. It appears certain he is thinking of the Gnostic spirit in religion, its exclusiveness, its interest in speculation as opposed to those things which are of the essence of true religion, its extravagant estimate of the value of asceticism. In the New Testament also we find stress laid on the fact that the power of working miracles in the Church is not due to magic but to something infinitely higher, namely faith, and that knowledge (*gnosis*) may be precious, but is not comparable to Christian virtue. Whilst the powers in the heavenly spheres are recognised, Christ is placed over all, as He would be by most Gnostics, and the reality of the Incarnation is of supreme importance.

Ignatius and Docetism

In one series of legends it is John, in another Peter, who is the protagonist of the apostles against Gnosticism; John being the opponent of Cerinthus, and Simon Peter of Simon Magus. The Deacon Nicolaus is also said to have been the founder of the sect mentioned in Revelation. The first definite protest comes from Ignatius of Antioch. It is interesting to observe that in the letters of this very early Christian martyr a keynote of later Antiochene theology is struck by his insistence on the humanity of our Lord. Ignatius, with his usual fervour, insists that Jesus truly suffered and not only in seeming (*Dokesis*). Yet in his epistles there are words and phrases which are decidedly Gnostic. The *Word* comes forth from *Silence*. There are "three mysteries of a cry." The birth of Jesus is hidden from Satan (who here shows the same ignorance as the Gnostic *Creator*). Ignatius' insistence on the need of unity and obedience to the Christian bishop may be due to his fear of the disintegrating power of incipient Gnosticism.

Irenæus

The Church's attack on Gnosticism opened with Irenæus' books against heresies which have only been preserved in a bald Latin translation, though some extracts of the original Greek are quoted by later writers. And here it may be well to recollect that even in early times the Church produced men well capable of defending its doctrines and upholding its opinions; and that Irenæus is one of the most valuable witnesses to Christian belief. A native of Asia Minor, he was a pupil of the venerable martyr Polycarp, who was burned alive in Smyrna about 156, at the age of 86, and therefore was born in 70, the year of the fall of Jerusalem. Polycarp had been a disciple of John, and Irenæus was therefore separated from the Apostles by only a single link. As has been indicated before, Irenæus attacks particularly the heresy of Valentinus. First he states the doctrine, then he refutes it, sometimes earnestly, sometimes by ridicule. Next he shows that as a novelty it has no right to be heard, and is, moreover, opposed to the teaching of Scripture. But Irenæus' chief weapons are (I) the tradition of the Apostles, (II) the episcopal succession, and (III) the Canon of Scripture.

I. Tradition of the Apostles

(I) Of the tradition of the Church of Ephesus, Irenæus speaks with personal knowledge. As he writes in his old age to his friend Ptolemæus, who had lapsed into heresy, he remembered in his old age the things he had heard in youth better than what had just been told him. He knew that when Polycarp, not long before his martyrdom, visited Rome in the pontificate of Anicetus, and Marcion had asked him if he knew who he was had replied, "I know thee the first-born of Satan." He remembered that he had heard that John, the disciple of the Lord, had

rushed out of the bath house when Cerinthus was there lest it should fall "because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." Thus, he shows that from the first the apostles had a horror of heresy and its teachers.

II. Episcopal succession

(II) But how did the Church maintain the true doctrine for so many generations? Many churches were founded by an apostle: and the bishops in unbroken succession taught the faith as it had been delivered to them by the apostles. Not to enumerate all, Irenæus takes the Roman Church, founded by Peter and Paul. Every church should agree with this one because of its pre-eminent authority (*potentiorem principalitatem*). Peter and Paul appointed Linus the first bishop, after him came Anacletus, then Clement, who had seen the blessed apostles. In Clement's time the letter of the Church of Rome to that of Corinth is proof that Gnosticism did not exist, and that the God of the Jews was recognised by the Church. After Clement came Evarestus, Alexander, Sextus, Telelesphorus, who was martyred, Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, Soter, and Eleutherus, the twelfth in order, and the pope when Irenæus wrote. That none of these bishops, and no catholic bishops, had ever heard of the teachings of Valentinus was a proof of its novelty and falsity.

III. Canon of Scripture

(III) In his description of Gnostic errors Irenæus says that, "they introduce that false and wicked story," and proceeds to tell the familiar tale from the Gospel of Thomas of how the child Jesus refused to learn the rest of the alphabet till the master had explained the mystery of the first letter, Aleph. Later he shows how the Gnostics themselves acknowledge only four gospels, though

they add to them and mutilate them. Thus, the Ebionites based their teaching on Matthew, Marcion on an abridged Luke, and Valentinus on John. His argument that there can be four Gospels, and neither more nor less, because there are but four principal (Greek, *catholic*) winds, four faces of the cherubim, four living creatures in Revelation, may not to us appear conclusive, but shows that he based this faith on what we consider to be Holy Scripture.

The Eucharist and the Resurrection of the flesh

The most interesting part of Irenæus' anti-Gnostic argument is perhaps his teaching on the Eucharist. His first object is to show that it is a continuation of the ancient sacrifices which, in accordance with the prophecy of Malachi, have been replaced throughout the world by a purer offering. It was necessary to defend the Old Testament for the continuity of the two dispensations, the old being throughout a preparation for Christ, who did not come suddenly as Marcion taught. The Eucharist is also a continuation of the offering of the first fruits, but the Church does so in a purer manner than the Jews, "offering the first fruits of his own created things." Christ took bread, that created thing, and the cup "which is part of the creation to which we belong." This refutes the whole Gnostic view of the evil of material things. In the synagogues of the heretics there can be no proper Eucharist on this account. The bread and wine when consecrated consist of two realities, the earthly and the heavenly, and if the former be denied, as by the Gnostics, how can there be a proper offering? Is it so to Christians, because flesh and spirit will both be raised to eternity?

Hippolytus

Irenæus was followed in a few years by another Greek-speaking opponent of Gnosticism in Rome, Hippolytus, the saint and bishop whose identity was so long a mys-

tery but is now established as that of a rival to Pope Callistus at Rome. A short and unimportant treatise, called the *Philosophumena,* or Philosophisings, had long been known and was published in 1701 and attributed to Origen. In 1840 much of the continuation of this was discovered on Mount Athos, and from the later chapters on the heresy of Callistus it became evident that Hippolytus, whoever he was, was the author. Two books are lost, but the most important part, those on the heresies, remain. It is considered that the whole is a series of lecture notes, delivered at Rome in the first part of the third century, with the object of showing that the opinions of the heretics are really purely pagan, being borrowed wholesale from the ancient philosophers.

Hippolytus is far more pretentious in his learning than Irenæus. He begins by describing all the philosophies of antiquity, including the Brachmans among the Indians and the Druids among the Celts. Two books are lost, and the fourth is devoted to the astrology and divination of his age. Hippolytus then goes on with his elaborate description of the Ophite heresies illustrated by quotations from their writings. But where he can be checked it is evident that his knowledge is miscellaneous rather than exact. Irenæus, as compared with Hippolytus, if his reading is less, knows better what he wants to prove, and generally gains his end. The style of Hippolytus is often rude—this was noticed by Photius, the most omnivorous reader of his (the ninth century) or almost any other age, who also remarks that Hippolytus denied the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hippolytus quotes Irenæus, whom he regards with great respect; but the objects of the two are not identical. Irenæus holds that the Church is right and states its position, whilst Hippolytus labours to show how all heresy is pagan.

Tertullian

Tertullian, the third early writer against heresy, is a greater man either than Irenæus or Hippolytus. Tertullian is the representative of the Roman lawyers who were attracted by Christianity. His home was Carthage and he displays much of the earnestness and not a little of the implacability of the African churchman. In character he resembles Marcion's Creator, inflexibly just and by no means amiable. Had he been allowed to live again in England under Elizabeth, or in New England a generation or so later, he would easily have found his place as a rigid Puritan. He brought his legal training into his Christianity. For theories he had little sympathy: to him an opinion was wrong, if he could show that it was illegal. In later life he became a member of the western Montanistic sect which was celebrated for its gloomy fanaticism. Hardly any Christian teacher can be found less in sympathy with the liberal thought of today, yet his counterpart is to be found in most churches. Yet even those who like Tertullian least must find much to admire in him. As a literary artist he may be compared to Tacitus and Carlyle. He made out of the forcible African Latin a language of his own. He invents phrases which have become proverbs. He can annihilate an opponent by an epigram. True his language is often crabbed, that he uses words in so technical a sense that we often miss the drift of his argument, that he says things so pointedly that he cannot be translated into any language. Nevertheless, he is never dull or unreadable and hardly a page of his lacks some striking expression. His morality is pure and elevated, his honesty unquestionable. His arguments, if perverse at times, are generally sound.

Tertullian's view of philosophy

Such a man as Tertullian had a natural horror of Gnosticism. "What has philosophy to do with the

Church?" he asks. Not that he lacks a philosophy of his own; for his theology coloured that of the entire western Church and played a great part in the development of dogma. But he has no patience with theories: to him a Gnostic is a perverse theorist and a careless thinker, who tries to expound Scripture. By what right does he do so? Scripture is the property of the Church, and without its mind no outsider can comprehend its meaning. The Church is a living organism. It is regularly constituted, and has a lawful existence. A Gnostic sect is an undisciplined collection of faddists lacking cohesion, without any regular ministry. A system like Marcion's has no foundation, it is not Scriptural, not even logical. Press his argument to a conclusion and he will be found to acknowledge not two gods, the True God and the Creator, but any number of gods. Tertullian hits hard and his blows tell. He is not the sort of theologian who would convert his opponent, but rather would delight his supporters by the vehemence of his attack. He was so conversant with Greek that he also wrote in that language; and used Irenæus as his main authority.

Alexandrian School

It is not, however, to Tertullian that we must look for the triumph of the Church over Gnosticism, but to the great teachers of Alexandria, especially Clement and Origen. They could sympathise more with its merits as well as recognise its defects, and thus undermine its influence by borrowing from it when it was right, and exposing its errors. Ambrose, the generous friend of Origen, was won over by this teacher from the school of Valentinus.

It was Clement who really vanquished Gnosticism, not by controversial methods but by substituting for its systems a real school of Christian philosophy. The three titles of his chief works indicate this. Clement begins his

literary labours by an exhortation to the heathen, addressing himself principally to Greeks to enter the Church. When they have entered, he prepares an *Instructor* (*Pædagogus*), who is to train them in the principles of religion. Finally, in the *Miscellanies* (*Stromateis* = carpet bags) Clement indoctrinates his carefully prepared disciple into the mystery of Christian philosophy. This is the same as the Neo-Platonic course, Purification, Initiation, Vision, and may either foreshadow it or be part of a threefold stage of training. At any rate, Clement opposes to Gnosticism a regular system of Christian education.

Gnosticism in Clement

In some respects Clement is a Gnostic. His definition of God recalls the fact that the Egyptian Basilides defined Him as the supreme negation. He is formless and nameless, though we sometimes give Him titles which are not to be taken in their proper sense; the One, the Good, Intelligence or Existence, or Father, or God, or Creator, or Lord. Clement agrees with Plato that God is beyond "Reality" (*ousia*), he even says He is beyond the One. The Son is the Consciousness of God.

Clement fundamentally Christian

But at the back of his philosophy Clement is a Christian. Scripture is to him the basis of true knowledge; to serve others is the prime duty of life. He is impressed with the goodness of Christ to His Church. In some respects, despite the difficulty of his language, he is one of the most attractive of the Fathers. His life was passed in the serene atmosphere of a lifelong learner and teacher. He takes a hopeful view of human nature, he loved literature and read widely. Gnosticism was, as writers of all schools admit, a great danger to the infant Church, but

it was, as far as was possible, killed by the learning of Clement, and not by the heavy blows of Tertullian.

The true Gnostic

Clement's most interesting contribution is the way he describes the true Gnostic, as he calls the ideal Christian. Faith is the basis of everything, and knowledge builds thereon, and the object of both is to bring man into harmony with the Eternal Will. Knowledge is in fact made perfect by love. The Gnosis of Clement is, in truth, a noble mysticism.

By the days of Origen (d. 252) the old Gnosticism had passed away. Great Christian schools of thought and a new philosophy were about to arise in Neo-Platonism. The immense services to religion, interpretation of Scripture, theology, and Christian learning of Origen, must be treated elsewhere. It is significant that Clement was thirteen centuries after his death removed from the calendar of saints, and Origen's orthodoxy became the subject of one of the most furious controversies in the history of the Church.

CHAPTER IX

POPULAR CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

Desire for a popular religious literature

The average Christian was neither a theologian nor a philosopher. He wanted edification and diversion in his reading. The Church supplied this, but not so extensively as the Gnostics. Orthodoxy is represented by the *Shepherd of Hermas* which opens with a romantic story of how Hermas was sold as a slave to a lady he loved and, after he had obtained his liberty, met again. She then appeared in a vision and revealed mysteries to him, being succeeded by a venerable lady representing the Church, and then by the Shepherd by whom many truths were allegorically conveyed to him. But it was the Gnostics who provided a literature for which the common folk craved, stories of the Virgin Mother, of the Infancy of Christ, of His boyhood, of His descent into the lower parts of the earth, and also the adventures of those little known but much revered persons, the Twelve Apostles. These were so in demand that the Church strove to give them a more orthodox form, and only in part succeeded, as nearly all retain traces of their original parentage.

Christian Apocrypha poor in quality but important

The literature of this description is very poor; the stories are often as unedifying as they are incredible, distinguished by nothing particularly lofty in sentiment or morality. They display as a rule very little power of invention. Yet they are in some respects of real impor-

tance in that they show a craving after the miraculous which is astonishing to us, and they contain material which became a most important part of medieval Christianity. Without the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts it is hardly possible to understand a gallery of old masters, or a Lady Chapel in a cathedral, or even a stained glass window with representations of the Twelve Apostles. Nor are some generally received beliefs of the Church comprehensible without them.

The Protevangelium

The very natural desire to know more of the birth and childhood of the Lord was gratified at an early date by what is called the *Protevangelium,* attributed to James, the Lord's brother. In its present form or forms it may be comparatively late, but parts were evidently known to Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century. From this *Protevangelium* we learn that the Virgin Mary was the daughter of Joachim and Anna; that her high destiny was known to her parents who committed her to the care of the High Priest. She was brought up in the Temple, where the Annunciation took place. When the time came to choose a husband for her the suitors brought rods. That of Joseph, an elderly widower, budded. The Saviour was born in a grotto at Bethlehem, and a heavenly light appeared to announce the event. Salome, who would not believe that a virgin could bear a child, was punished by her arm seeming to be on fire and separated from her body. She was healed when she took the infant Saviour in her arms. It seems to be implied that Mary was a virgin not only before but after the birth of her Divine Son. This is enough to indicate how much pious belief owes to the imaginative literature of the early Church; and most of this is Gnosticism, imperfectly removed or concealed by Catholic adapters. When one reads the

Protevangelium one appreciates the dignified restraint of the stories of the infancy of Jesus in Matthew and Luke.

Gospel of Thomas

The childhood of Jesus is related in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Here we have miracle after miracle, some trivial, some malicious; and when it is evident that the writers knew the New Testament, this is the more remarkable. The child Jesus makes clay sparrows into living ones. He withers the arm of the schoolmaster when He would strike him. Mary and Joseph remonstrate at the vindictive miracles of their omnipotent Child. Jesus knows all things in His infancy: He does not advance in wisdom, and certainly not in favour with man. There is also legendary material about the Lord after the Resurrection. In the recently discovered *Gospel of Peter,* a fragment relating to the Passion and Resurrection, Gnosticism is seen in the remark that Jesus hung on the Cross "as though he had no pain." Three figures came forth from the Tomb; the height of two reached the heavens, but one was higher than the heavens. In the *Gospel of Nicodemus* there is a description of "the harrowing of Hell," which so excited medieval imagination.

Apocryphal Acts

The Twelve Apostles were a fruitful field for the inventive powers, and the most impossible legends are found in the Acts, some of which found their way into the services of the Church. A special collect was actually composed for the first prayer book of Edward VI (1549), alluding to "Andrew's sharp and painful death upon the cross." This was altered in 1552 to one speaking of his ready obedience to the call of Christ.

Clementine Recognitions

Naturally the legends of Peter are the most conspicuous; and the most interesting appears in the so-called

Recognitions of Clement. Here we have all the materials of the common romance of a family long parted being once more united by the recognition of lost parents, brothers, and sisters. The story is that Clement, who had come from Rome to Syria by the advice of Barnabas to see Peter and learn about Jesus, was a relative of the emperor, and the son of Faustinianus and Mattidia. He had two twin brothers, Faustus and Faustinus, older than himself. His mother and two brothers had left Rome by reason of a vision, and had disappeared. Faustinianus had gone in search of them and also vanished; and Clement was left alone, and had reached the age of 32. The story relates how Peter brings the whole family together. Faustinianus, it goes on to say, is at first hard to convince. Simon Magnus suddenly appears, having given Faustinianus his own appearance, much to Simon's discomfiture; for Faustinianus, looking like Simon, declares the magician to be an impostor. Of course Peter restores the old man to his proper shape and baptises him.

Acts of Peter

In the *Acts of Peter* in Rome there is the popular legend that when persecution threatened, the Lord appeared to Peter as the apostle was starting from the city. Peter said to his Master, *Domine quo Vadis?* The Lord replied, "I go to Rome to be crucified." Peter returned to suffer. But this beautiful story did not satisfy the appetite for the marvellous. Here is an example of what was appreciated. Peter is refused admission to the home at Rome where Simon Magus lodged.

And Peter looked and saw a great dog, bound with a mighty chain, and he went and let him loose. And the dog received a man's voice and said, "What willest thou that I should do, thou servant of the mysterious living

God?" And Peter said, "Go in and say to Simon in the midst of his company, 'Peter saith Come out in public: for I am come to Rome for thy sake, wretch and corrupter of the minds of the simple.' " And the dog ran and went in, and burst into the midst of Simon and his friends, and standing with his forefeet off the ground said in a loud voice: "Thou Simon, Peter servant of Christ stands at the door and says, 'Come out in public; for I am come to Rome for thy sake, wretch and corrupter of the minds of the simple.' " And Simon hearing this and beholding this incredible sight ceased from the words by which he was seducing the audience, and they all wondered. (Act Pet., Ch. IX.)

Acts of Philip

The *Acts of Philip* are even more extravagant. Philip goes to Athens and confounds the philosophers. They send for the High Priest who comes from Jerusalem with five hundred scribes. The High Priest rushes at Philip, who promptly blinds him and the five hundred scribes. The High Priest becomes abusive and Philip speaks thus to him:

"Lo I will pray God that he may come and make himself manifest before thee and the five hundred, and before all these who are present; and maybe thou wilt behave and repent. But if thou remainest to the end in thine unbelief, a wonderful thing will happen to thee which shall be spoken of from generation to generation. For thou shalt go down quick into hell before all these beholders, because thou continuest unbelieving; and because thou seekest to turn this multitude from the true life."

Then Jesus descends from heaven, and Philip is hailed "O Philip, once Son of Thunder, but now of Compassion." The bystanders ask Philip to kill the High Priest. The apostle replies "Render not evil for evil." The apostle

says to Jesus, "*Zabarthan, Sabathabat, bramanouch,* come quick." At these magic words the earth opens and the High Priest sinks to his knees. As he still remains obdurate he sinks to his middle, then to his neck. Seeing that he is hopeless, Philip lets the earth swallow him, and he disappears. The five hundred are healed of their blindness. All believe, and all ends happily.

On his way to Greece, according to another story, Philip, accompanied by Mariamne who prepared the salt for the Lord's Supper, "but Martha ministered to the multitude and toiled much," met a leopard and a he-goat who were given the power of human speech. Philip, Bartholomew, and Mariamne, with the he-goat and the leopard, come to the city of the Serpent worshippers. As Philip is being crucified, he resolves to destroy the city, despite the remonstrances of the Apostle John and of Jesus Himself. The city is destroyed, but is restored by the power of Christ. Philip dies on the cross, and Bartholomew goes elsewhere, and later dies a martyr on the cross.

Acts of Thomas

The *Acts of Thomas* take us to India, and contain the well-known story of Judas-Thomas, the carpenter, being ordered to build a palace for the king. He says he will do it in the winter, though summer is the usual time for building. When the king comes to see the palace, he finds that Thomas has supported poor people, whose prayers will provide the king a mansion in heaven. A decidedly Gnostic extract denouncing marriage may be given as illuminating. Thomas is asked to bless the king's son and his bride. He does so, and all retire.

"And the bridegroom raised the curtain of the bride-chamber to bring in the bride; and he saw the Lord Jesus having the appearance of Judas-Thomas, who had just

gone forth, after blessing them, and he said: 'Wert not thou the first to go out? How is it I find thee here?' And the Lord said: 'I am not Judas, who is Thomas, I am his brother.' And the Lord sat on the bed, and ordered them to sit on chairs and he said . . ."

Then the Saviour delivers a discourse on the inconveniences of the married life, its anxieties, bad children, and so on, in words which resemble those of some of the ascetic fathers of the fifth century.

Enough has been quoted to illustrate these *Acts;* and it is remarkable how often the apostles' place is taken by Jesus Himself. They show how insatiable was the desire of the marvellous on the part of the pious reader in very primitive times. One more book of *Acts,* however, may be quoted because it illustrates the fascination of martyr stories and contains some very curious illustrations of life in Asia Minor in the first century.

Acts of Paul and Thecla

These are the ancient *Acts* of Paul and Thecla. Onesiphorus, his sons Simmias and Zeno, and his wife, Lectra, desire to entertain Paul at Iconium and they go to meet him by the royal (or imperial) road, which goes to Lystra. They recognise Paul by Titus' description of him. "A short man, bald headed, bandy-legged, healthy looking, with his eyebrows meeting each other, inclined to be red-haired, of gracious presence." He abides in their house. Whilst Paul preaches Thecla, daughter of Theoclea and betrothed to Thamuris, listens from a neighbouring window. When Paul is imprisoned for preaching against marriage, Thecla bribes the jailor with a golden hand-mirror to admit her to the prison. Paul is scourged and expelled from the city and Thecla is ordered to be burned. She is saved by a violent storm, finds Paul, who has been praying for her, and begs to be his companion. The pru-

dent apostle declines the responsibility of so beautiful an associate; but promises to baptise her if she will be patient. In the meantime "Queen Tryphæna" takes Thecla to her house, and treats her as a daughter. Once more Thecla is exposed to death, this time to the beasts. All the women of the city are on her side and cry out "Unholy Judgment" when she is brought into the arena.

"Now Thecla was received from the hand of Tryphæna and was unclothed, but received a girdle, and she was thrown to the beasts. And lions and bears were sent against her. And a savage lioness ran to her and crouched at her feet. And the multitude of the women cried out greatly. And a bear rushed at her, and the lioness ran forward and rent the bear. Then a lion of Alexander's who had been trained to attack men came against her, and the lioness grappled with the lion and was killed. And the women grieved greatly that her helper the lioness was dead. Then water full of seals (possibly crocodiles) was brought into the arena and Thecla threw herself in 'in the name of Christ' saying, 'I baptise myself.' "

The whole story is a mixture of accurate detail and fiction. There was a queen Tryphæna; and the initial description of Paul is remarkably probable.

Legends illustrate popular Christianity

These legends may seem unworthy of serious consideration but are in truth as important as any dry and learned treatise. They show what manner of people many of the first believers were, and how great was their credulity. Though of Gnostic origin the popularity of these tales is proved by the fact that they are in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and other languages. In time they are not far removed from the New Testament. In spirit they are as far apart as possible. There are occasionally

prayers of some beauty and a few really Christian sentiments; but, in general, the tone is not much superior to the rude language in which they are related. Their value is the light they throw on the average Christian belief for some centuries; and warn us against the assumption that primitive Christianity was necessarily free from superstition. It redounds greatly to the credit of the leaders of the Church that they did not encourage these productions. On the contrary they condemned them and did their best to confine their people to the recognised Scriptures of the Church. As early as A.D. 170 we find Sarapion, Bishop of Antioch, trying to suppress the *Gospel of Peter*. The few catalogues of Scripture have warnings against heretical books. At the end of the fifth century Pope Gelasius issued a decree against them. And this was not simply because they were heretical, but were foolish and frivolous and unworthy of the Gospel. The appearance of these *Gospels* and *Acts* did not a little to fix the Canon of the New Testament, even the most doubtful books of which are incomparably superior to anything in the larger body of literature which the Church refused to accept.

CHAPTER X

EDUCATION IN RELIGION

Education in ancient times

To understand primitive Christianity it is desirable to ascertain how the converts were prepared for their contest with the world. For this purpose, before entering upon Christian education, it is necessary to discover how people were educated in the pagan world at large, and also in Judaism, in order to understand what was the general background of the cultured heathen, as well as how the Jew was trained to understand and to maintain an almost similar religion.

Roman education practical

Roman education was severely practical. The young patrician was exercised in the two duties which befitted his rank; he was destined to be a soldier and a politician, and he learned to be the one in the Campus Martius and the other by attending the debates of the Senate. As it was incumbent on him when he grew up to plead the rights of his dependents (*clientes*), he had to study law, and as he would have to perform in some way or other the duties of a priest he was obliged to learn the ritual by which the gods were placated. The use of arms and the study of law, religion, and politics were the necessary equipment of a gentleman; and, in addition, no people were more expert in managing their property to advantage than the Roman aristocracy. Art, literature, philosophy,

and the humanities generally, were considered to be the province of Greeks, slaves, and the inferior races of mankind.

Interest in Greek culture

This prevailed till the close of the second Punic War, when the leaders in Roman society began to take a serious interest in the learning of Greece. From this time forward the gentler arts began to be cultivated with avidity, and by the fall of the Republic the most prominent Romans gloried in being educated men, and eagerly attended the great philosophical schools, especially that of Athens. At the same time the teaching of the young was generally in the hands of slaves, whose value was greatly enhanced if they had been highly educated. The modern world has still good reason to deplore this fact. The Greeks had long been an educated people, but education, as organised on modern lines, began with the Macedonian conquerors of Egypt. The Ptolemies made Alexandria with its libraries, museums, zoological gardens, paid teachers, etc., into something resembling a university city. Like many universities, its success in commentating on literature was more conspicuous than in production of original work. The work of the Alexandrians, however, was very valuable in developing first Judaism, and then Christianity, as both religions looked for their authority to ancient books requiring explanations, and soon began to treat their Bible as the ancient Greeks had their Homer.

Education widespread, and mainly theoretical

By the beginning of the Christian era education had become widespread. Every important Roman was well acquainted with Greek, and employed it freely. The great classical writers of antiquity were already recognised as the standards, and grammar, or what we should

term literature, was the prime object of a youth's training. The art of declamation, of correct expression, of writing essays was insistently inculcated. This must be borne in mind if we would understand many Christian documents, notably the *Apologies*. They are the production of men trained to be rhetoricians. The philosophers also had their part in education, especially in moral duties, and in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* we have an interesting example of what some expected their pupils to know before attending their courses. The Pythagorean to whom Justin applied would not take him as a pupil because he had not studied music, astronomy, and geometry. Rich people often engaged a philosopher to act the part of a tutor or chaplain to the family.

Jewish education

The Jews from time immemorial, as we see in the Bible, made the education of their youth in religion a matter of the greatest importance. It was fixed by law when the boy should begin to study the Law, and when he should be under the obligation to observe it. Schools were early established, and according to tradition Jesus attended a school as a child. The fact that He was discovered sitting at the feet of the doctors in the Temple both hearing them and asking them questions, is a proof that youths were encouraged to go to the rabbis. Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and Josephus tells us that, so extraordinary was his own progress, that by the time he was fourteen priests consulted him on points of Law. Jewish education was thorough, and involved a knowledge of Hebrew—already long a dead language; but in Jerusalem it was very narrow and some of the most honoured doctors refused even to learn Greek. The Hellenistic Jew probably received a Gentile education as well as one in his peculiar religion.

Educated Christians—Origen's training as a boy

The Christians were not as a rule wise after the flesh, but their best literature was produced by men at least as well educated as their contemporaries. These had received the usual instruction, and some like Tertullian, Cyprian, Minutius Felix, and others, were trained lawyers. Others, Justin Martyr, for example, were styled philosophers. Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus of Rome, were very widely read men of letters. All confessed that Origen was a prodigy of learning. What Eusebius says of Origen may be taken as a specimen of what the best Christian education was at the close of the second century. It must be remembered that Leonides, Origen's father, was a devout Christian who ended his life as a martyr for the faith. He made his son go through the entire course of the encyclical study pursued by every educated Greek, and take it seriously, and also instructed him in Scripture, making him learn and repeat portions of it every day.

The New Testament in a sense a manual

In a sense the New Testament is a manual of Christian instruction. The theory that the Gospels were originally oral has been long discarded; but as they now are they appear admirably suited to instruct converts about Jesus. The fact that the Apostle Paul wished his letters to be read in public shows that he considered them suitable for instruction, and many of his precepts are cast in a form perhaps intentionally easy to commit to memory.

Its moral instruction

It appears at least possible that the lists of virtues and vices in the New Testament, *e.g.*, our Lord's words "Out of the heart of man proceed envy," etc., etc., St. Paul's "The works of the flesh are these, fornication," etc., and

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc., are not rhetorical but intended as lists to be committed to memory of what to seek and avoid. That there were such in early times is seen in the frequent repetitions of the *Two Ways*. St. Matthew's Gospel seems further to indicate that the passages of the Old Testament which proved that Jesus had been foretold by the prophets were arranged and collected in manuals of *Testimonia* or evidences. The Catholic Epistles, II Peter, James and I John, are moral treatises written for believers generally as manuals for instruction. This would indicate that the teachers of the Church paid attention to the inculcation of moral precepts indicating what the Christian character should be. It was also realised that instruction to be profitable must be progressive, that there were truths for which beginners were unfit, and that they must be treated as children and fed accordingly.

The sermon

The Christians took over from the Jews the practice of reading the Law and the prophets and expounding them to their congregations, and thus the sermon early came into prominence. In fact the Church was from the first a school. The presbyters who were to be most "honoured" were those who laboured in word and doctrine. The traditions or deposit of faith was to be carefully handed down and committed to faithful men. Edification, or building up, on which so much stress is laid, is merely another word for education.

Preparation for baptism

In early times, according to the Acts of the Apostles, no sooner did a man believe than he was baptised, sometimes with his whole household. This meant that to confess Christ was enough, however imperfect the knowledge of Him might be. But this could not be expected to last;

and it soon became necessary to put candidates for baptism through a course in which they learned the truths of the Faith.

Instruction of Catechumens

The Order of Catechumens, or people under instruction for baptism, now makes its appearance, and with it a regular Christian system of education. The first method was by attendance at the beginning part of the service of worship, where they heard the Scriptures read and expounded. They were thus accustomed to see believers worship, but debarred from witnessing the celebration of their mysteries. This opens the entire question of the so-called *disciplina arcani* (a purely modern expression) and reserve in the matter of imparting the truths of religion. Of course the idea that there are two Christianities, one for the spiritual and another for the ignorant, is a fundamental characteristic of Gnosticism. To admit this would be to surrender the whole catholic position. But is it wise to communicate all an enlightened Christian knows, or thinks he knows, to the weak brother who may thereby be led astray by misunderstanding what is told him? This perplexed the teachers of the third century, especially at Alexandria, and is an even greater difficulty to-day, now that Higher Criticism is making the right interpretation of Scripture more difficult and many official dogmas are tacitly allowed to fall into the background. The general principle adopted was that no doctrine of the Church might be kept back from believers but that certain explanations, especially when allegorical, must be accepted with discretion.

Why Baptism is called Enlightenment

But the doctrines of the Faith were not revealed to non-Christians in their entirety; and the postulant for

baptism went through a gradual process of initiation, before receiving the full meed of light at his baptism, which was called *the enlightenment*. The heathen were not allowed to share in all the doctrines of the Christians, lest they should profane them or turn them into ridicule.

Later Roman "order" for baptism

The ancient *disciplina arcani* is indicated long after its spirit had departed, in the order for baptism at Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries. The *ordo* or ceremonial of baptism as it was performed by the pope and the numerous clergy of Rome has all the appearance of baptism as it was administered to adults. The long preparation of catechumens after their registration, the exorcisms, the daily advances they made during holy week till the creed was communicated to them (*traditio symboli*) with the Lord's Prayer, to be repeated at baptism (*redditio symboli*); baptism being immediately followed by admission to full communion. Perhaps already some of these rites had become formal; but they had a deep meaning in the earliest days. Then a Christian was indeed an initiate, given the secret words and rites of his new order. This as we have seen was not originally part of baptism and the communication of secrets may possibly be due to the influence of the mysteries of other cults; but anyhow, there was a *disciplina arcani* in the sense that some mysteries were reserved till the day of baptism, for which the candidates were prepared with scrupulous care.

The Creed a means of instruction

The Creed is a survival of the instruction of the catechumens. Originally, perhaps, it was the formula of baptism "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Gradually the function of each Person was explained. But even now the Roman Church in its bap-

tismal creed has preserved somewhat of the terseness of a very early form entrusted to candidates at baptism, far shorter than the so-called Apostles' Creed which is in Latin Christendom the belief of the Church set forth for elementary instruction. In the East, as we learn from Eusebius of Cæsarea at the Council of Nicæa, and from Cyril of Jerusalem afterwards, it was more elaborate in character.

The Catechetical School

Christian education reached perhaps as high a level as it has ever attained to at Alexandria. There the preparation of the catechumens became a veritable scientific experiment in religious education. They were divided into classes according to their capacity and the most advanced were under the superintendence of the head of the Catechetical School, generally the most famous scholar in the Christian world. Among the great names that of Origen stands pre-eminent, and we have a description of his method by the pen of St. Gregory the wonder worker (*Thaumaturgus*), the apostolic bishop of Cappadocia, who studied under Origen, not at Alexandria but at Cæsarea in Palestine. He says that his teacher encouraged the Socratic method, and asked questions as to reasoning and the meaning of words. Then he introduced the study of nature in Aristotelian fashion. The course he recommended began with geometry, then astronomy, then morals, and lastly Greek philosophy. He advised his pupils to read all philosophies except those of the atheists. He concludes by saying that Origen seemed specially chosen of God to interpret His prophets.

Clement of Alexandria's scheme of education

Earlier, as has been indicated, Clement's three works, the *Exhortation, Pædagogus,* and the *Stromateis,* sketched

out a scheme of education, and one can but wonder at the extraordinarily wide conception the great Alexandrians had of the highest Christian culture. In truth they were eminently humanistic. Clement possessed a less original, but more liberal mind than Origen, whose uncompromising Christianity was decidedly ascetic. It has been rightly said that probably there is no nobler scheme of Christian education than his. Nor must it be forgotten that Alexandria was not the only Catechetical School; institutions like it were to be found at Antioch, Athens, and in the further East at Edessa and Nisibis.

Cyril of Jerusalem's catechetical lectures

The lectures which Cyril of Jerusalem delivered as a priest during the Lent of about 347 may be taken as an example of what had been delivered long before to the catechumens. They do not impress one with being strikingly original but as thoroughly sensible discourses on practical religion. In the *Catechetical Lectures,* Cyril goes through the regular course of initiating his candidates into the sacramental mysteries. He teaches morality, the use of Scripture, and leads up to the Creed and Lord's Prayer. After Easter he gives the newly baptised five more *Mystagogical Lectures.* The merit of the lectures is that they are not remarkable but are an excellent example of how a priest gave instruction in a church like that of Jerusalem to a congregation not specially noted for its learning.

Christians on the whole intelligent

On the whole it appears that no effort was spared, at any rate in the cities of the East, to give the converts a careful and systematic training in the Faith and in the duties of those who professed it. The immense enthusiasm which at a later date preachers like Gregory of

Nazianzus and John Chrysostom aroused, is evidence that the audiences at Constantinople and Antioch were intelligent and appreciative; and the interest, not always salutary, shown in ecclesiastical disputes in the most mysterious subjects by the multitude in the larger cities, is a proof that they had received some education in theology. In a word, the reproach which can be levelled against much of the Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries is not that of ignorance, but that it was too much interested in theological problems and not enough in following the simpler rules of moral conduct.

CHAPTER XI

THE CHURCH PROSCRIBED BY LAW

Christian property protected

It is a strange paradox that the Christians were persecuted by the criminal and protected by the civil law of Rome. As clubs, benefit societies, owners of graveyards, even of places of worship, they could avail themselves of legal recognition. They could assemble without molestation, perform funeral rites, and own churches. There was as a rule no reason why they should worship in secret. Tertullian can say, "we have filled your marketplaces, your houses, etc.," meaning that by the end of the second century it was a known fact that everywhere people were to be found living openly as Christians. It is not easy to recall an instance of the police dispersing congregations, or hunting down persons suspected of being Christians, or of their breaking into the vast catacombs around the city of Rome. There were certainly churches in the time of the fiercest persecution of all, that of Diocletian, but though they were visited by the officials, and the priests were ordered to give up their Scriptures, there is not, though some were pulled down, any record of a world-wide destruction of Christian edifices.

The religion of Christ was illegal

On the other hand the Christian religion was so illegal that it would almost appear that in the eye of the law to have ever joined in it was punishable by death. It was an unlicensed religion; and to practise it was a crime.

The empire was on the whole tolerant, and its officials had no inducement to annoy peaceable citizens who paid their taxes and gave no trouble; but at any time the law could be put in motion, and once a prosecution commenced, as is generally the case with legal procedure, there is no saying where it might end.

Ancestral religions tolerated

The policy of the empire was to respect the religion of every people. The Jews were assured of toleration. As a nation with an ancestral religion their worship was safe. No attempt was made to force Jews to abandon the Law, except possibly by Hadrian for a few years. The spirit of Antiochus Epiphanes was non-existent in Rome. Even new religions were also tolerated, but only on condition that they had been recognised by Law. "Let no one have gods by himself unless they have been publicly recognised" was a fundamental maxim. Christianity could not be considered illegal as long as it was regarded as a Jewish sect. The Jews might dislike its doctrines and raise disturbances about them, but this was no affair of the Roman authorities. It was a question of their law; and, as Gallio said, this was their business, not his. When Claudius heard that the Jews were rioting about Chrestus, as Suetonius informs us, he did not trouble to enquire who Chrestus was, but drove them all out of the city.

Attitude of the Romans towards the Christians in Acts

The attitude of the Romans to the Christian propaganda as described in Acts is a strong argument in favour of the historical accuracy of the book. The Jews, in the opening chapters, are not represented as hostile to the new sect which accepted the Messiahship of Jesus, whose death was regarded by many as a mistake, if not a crime,

on the part of the rulers. The priests, in conformity with the evidence both of Josephus and of the Talmud, were not fanatics, but men of the world, who had the disciples arrested, not because they hated their religion, but because they appeared likely to become a nuisance. The death of Stephen was another matter: the Hellenistic Jews raised a disturbance in Jerusalem apparently at a time when there was no Roman authority in the city, and Stephen was stoned (Acts vi), whether after a formal trial, or in a riot, is uncertain. Here Saul appears as a fanatical persecutor with authority from the High Priest to arrest Jews who believed in Jesus at Damascus. This is unquestionably a difficulty till other evidence is forthcoming that the High Priest's jurisdiction over other Jews authorised him to send to distant cities and arrest heretics. The martyrdom of James has every appearance of probability. Agrippa, as king, had the *jus gladii,* and as professedly a devout Jew and politically interested in securing popularity in Jerusalem, he might have put to death a member of a suspected sect. (Acts xii, 1-2.) When we come to Paul the case is fairly plain. The Jews detested his liberal policy towards the Gentiles, and were determined to bring him into disfavour with the Roman government, which maintained a strictly impartial attitude. The purpose of the writer of Acts may be apologetic; but the description of Paul's sufferings and trials is too typical to be passed over. It will illustrate the attitude of the empire to the religion of the Jews.

Persecution of Paul as a missionary

On their first appearance in Asia Minor, Paul and Barnabas experienced the usual fate of missionaries of a new faith. First they were received, at least with interest, and at times with enthusiasm, and then expelled for causing disturbances; when Paul was stoned at Lystra it was

evidently in a riot (Acts xiv, 19-20). The first contact with the regular authorities was at Philippi. This was not due to the Jews: Paul had healed a girl with a spirit of divination, a *clairvoyante* as we should call her, and her proprietors had lost money thereby. So they trumped up a charge against Paul and Silas for having taught un-Roman customs in a "colony." The magistrates beat and imprisoned them, but evidently on reflection did not believe the charge. (Acts xvi, 16-40.) At Thessalonica it was the mob, excited by the Jews, who caused the riot. It was evidently the object of the idle crowd which loafed about the *agora* to drag the preachers out of Jason's house and clamour to the city council for their punishment. Here again the officials acted with moderation. They took bail of Jason for the good behaviour of his guests, who this time were explicitly charged with treason by proclaiming that Jesus was the Emperor—the Greek *basileus* is not here a king, but the rival of Cæsar. (Acts xvii, 7.) At Corinth Gallio refused so much as to listen to the complaints of the Jews—if it were an affair affecting their religion, it was their business not his. (Acts xviii, 12-17.) The riot in the theatre at Ephesus was due to the new religion being injurious to trade; and no attempt was made to bring any definite charge against Paul and his companions. (Acts xix.) Finally, at Jerusalem, the Jews carefully abstained from raising the question of Paul's heterodoxy, and sought to involve him in the more dangerous charge of bringing Greeks within the sacred precincts of the Temple. (Acts xxi, 28.) Several chapters (xxi-xxvi) are devoted to proving that no responsible person, Felix, Agrippa, or even Cæsar, was prepared seriously to entertain this accusation. This shows that, at any rate till towards the middle of Nero's reign, Paul, obnoxious as he was to the Jews, could not be punished by the Roman authorities on the ground that he

was a Christian. Paul, Barnabas, and Silas had much the same experiences in the cities of the empire as John and Charles Wesley in the eighteenth century had in England. By causing crowds to assemble they endangered public peace, and compelled the magistrates to intervene.

The Neronian persecution

The persecution of Nero, alluded to in the famous passage in Tacitus, throws so important a light on the attitude of the law towards Christianity that it deserves careful attention. It must, however, be borne in mind that it does not furnish contemporary evidence, but reflects the opinion of a writer who flourished more than a generation after the event. Nero, as is well known, was suspected of having caused the great fire of Rome, and sought to lay the blame on the newly discovered sect of the Christians. The fire at Rome was in A.D. 64, a few years after the birth of Tacitus.

Tacitus' testimony

To stifle the report, Nero selected and punished the people popularly called Christians. They took their name from Christus who was put to death by the procurator Pilate, in the days of Tiberius. His death checked the superstition, but after a while it broke out again in Judea, and also in Rome, whither everything cruel and impure betakes itself and is practised. First those who openly professed themselves Christians were arrested, and on their information a great multitude was convicted, not as incendiaries, but as enemies of mankind. Nero opened his gardens to the public and entertained them with the tortures of these criminals, some of whom were set on fire and made to act as candles. The emperor even dressed himself like a coachman and mingled with the mob. The Christians got no more than they deserved, but all the

same these executions, which had no public advantage, moved men to compassion.

Here there is no mention of a judicial procedure against the Christians as such. They were punished unjustly as incendiaries. Such wretches deserved their fate for their unsocial attitude; but Tacitus does not say that their death was legal, rather the reverse.

The suppression of the Bacchic worship in Rome

In reading of this, the earliest persecution, one is instinctively reminded of the story of the suppression of the Bacchic Worship in Rome in B.C. 187. It was suddenly discovered to be distinguished for its impurity and profanity, and the consuls arrested and punished multi tudes. Posthumus, the Consul, addressed the Senate on the abomination of unclean, unauthorised foreign religions. No doubt Nero's agents worked up a similar scare about the new and dangerous Christian superstition which resulted in so much cruel bloodshedding.

Pliny's letter to Trajan

Pliny's famous letter to Trajan throws light on the judicial procedure, and perhaps gave a precedent for the future. Pliny the Younger was proconsul of Bithynia when he wrote to the emperor for instructions as to how to act in regard to Christians. He had never come across Christians before and was uncertain as to what to do. The points on which he sought the emperor's advice were:

(1) Is it allowable to take age into consideration?
(2) Can pardon be given on repentance?
(3) Can anyone be pardoned when he has ceased to be a Christian?
(4) Is a man to be punished for being a Christian, or for crimes committed as a Christian?

Then he described the procedure he had adopted:

(1) Those who confessed, and refused to recant after three chances had been given, were sentenced to death.

(2) Roman citizens were sent to Rome.

At this juncture an anonymous paper (*libellus*) arrived full of names.

(3) Those who denied that they were Christians were set free on praying to the gods, making a libation to the emperor's statue, and cursing Christ. No Christian could be induced to do this.

(4) Those who said they had ceased to be Christians and submitted to the same test were set free. These said there was nothing criminal in the religion. They met and sang hymns to Christ, and took an oath not to commit murder, theft, adultery, etc. They were accustomed to assemble for a meal, but gave this up when the emperor's edict against clubs appeared.

On this Pliny tortured two maids (*ancillæ*) called ministrants (*ministræ*) (slaves could only give evidence under torture), and could find that Christianity was nothing worse than a base superstition. It was, however, very popular; but Pliny's leniency had had a good result. The temples were once more thronged and the farmers were doing well, now that they could sell their hay for the sacrificial victims. Pliny's advice was—give the people a chance (*pœnitentiæ locus*) of clearing themselves of the imputation of being Christians.

Trajan's reply

Trajan approved Pliny's procedure. It was not one for hard and fast rules. Anonymous accusations should be disregarded; and there are to be no police investigations as to who are Christians.

These rules were long observed. There was no inquisi-

torial system; the accused were always given the chance to recant; the magistrates as a rule tried to avoid bloodshed. Even torture was applied with the idea of saving the lives of Christians by making them offer sacrifice. By a strict law every one who entered the Church was a criminal and punishable with death; to allow him the chance to escape was leniency.

The Church dreaded as a secret society

Reading between the lines of the very brief statements of Tacitus and Pliny we can see why this was so. The Christian Church was suspected by the authorities to be a secret, and by the public to be an immoral, society. It was thought to be an enemy to civilisation, what we should call anarchistic, and therefore quite capable of plotting to set Rome on fire. It resolutely refused to do the customary honour to the statue of the emperor. This worship of the genius of Rome and of the emperor was a great means of uniting all the peoples under the Roman dominion. The Jews had incurred great odium for refusing it: but after all they were a nation rather than a religion, and their customs deserved respect. The Christians on the other hand were a sect, well organised and meeting in secret, accused of withdrawing more and more people from their loyalty to the state. They were suspected, much as we in wartime suspect people who refuse to rise at the sound of the national anthem or to salute the flag. But the Roman government was too wise to crowd the prisons and scaffolds with people whose conduct was harmless, if their views were peculiar.

Lyons and Vienne

The next illustration shall be the famous persecution of Lyons and Vienne, as it shows how popular supersti-

tion could provoke the authorities to acts of ferocious cruelty. It is related in the well-known letter of the Church of those cities to that of Smyrna. Here it will be necessary to dwell not so much on the heroic self-sacrifice of the martyrs as on the more legal aspect; but it is a story which cannot fail to arouse our emotion.

The symptoms which heralded the coming troubles was that the Christians became suddenly unpopular. They were driven from the public baths, and no one would admit them to his house. If any appeared the rabble insulted them, stoning them and beating them as enemies.

At last the magistrate (Greek *chiliarch*) came to the city. Vettius Epagathus, a man of position, protested. The governor asked him if he were a Christian, and on his confessing that he was, he was sentenced to death ("promoted to be a martyr," says the letter). The leaders (the proto-martyrs) confessed the Faith eagerly and were condemned. Ten, "unprepared and undisciplined" for the struggle, recanted. There was a regular inquisition. The heathen slaves of Christians were examined and forced under threat of torture to accuse their masters of devouring children and as guilty of incestuous connections, and of things "so vile that we cannot believe anyone has ever done them." At this the populace, even those who had previously favoured the Christians, went mad with indignation; and horrible scenes in the arena followed, the Christians being put to unspeakable tortures, their leader in endurance being the slave girl Blandina. It is in truth a terrible story of the most savage cruelty, as well as of the noblest heroism, and the truly Christian spirit displayed by the martyrs.

Procedure in this persecution

Apart from its dramatic character and the vivid description given in the letter to Smyrna, the persecution

at Lyons and Vienne is important as illustrating the procedure of the Roman law. The hellish cruelty of the executions was, to judge from other martyrdoms, illegal, as was the refusal to give up the bodies of those who had been executed to their friends. But the judicial procedure, so far as it was regular, was much the same as Pliny's, sixty years or so earlier. The persecution was in A.D. 177. The persistent Christians, the *qui fatebantur* of Tacitus, were condemned on admitting they belonged to the Church. Those who recanted were released. Slaves were tortured, or threatened with torture, to give evidence. Roman citizens were kept till the emperor should decide their case. The interesting point is that this persecution was due to judicial action, spurred on by the fanaticism of the mob, who believed that the Christians were the vilest of mankind.

Later persecution

The great persecutions of the third century by Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian, all followed the same procedure. They differed from the earlier in being not so much popular as political. The object of the government was to stamp out Christianity as a danger to the state, and to do so by an organized system of repression. These persecutions were not local as the earlier ones had been, or dependent upon the feeling of the crowd or the caprice of the magistrate. They applied everywhere, and the machinery of the law was put in force throughout the empire. But even then there was no need for fresh legislation, and the edicts were literally edicts, in the sense that they were declarations as to how the law would be enforced. Decius set the precedent of requiring everybody to sacrifice to the gods and to the genius of the emperor of Rome. This was enough. Every Christian must necessarily be discovered; if he sacrificed, it was proof that

he was not a Christian. If he refused, he was confessedly guilty of a capital crime, which might be enforced or relaxed by imprisonment or loss of civil rights. If he could be induced to comply with the orders of the government, he was at once set free. The instigators of the Diocletian persecution were the philosophers, who favoured the revived paganism of the age, and the Christians were tested by their willingness to surrender their sacred Scriptures. But the principle was the same: Christianity was illegal, and its practice was connived at. As a rule the ferocity of the law made it unworkable, like that of the penal laws in England against Roman Catholics in the eighteenth century, and the Christians were seldom molested. But, till the days of Constantine, every one who accepted the Gospel did so at the risk of his life.

CHAPTER XII

THE SPIRIT OF MARTYRDOM

Advantages offered by the Church

"And Peter began to say to him, Behold we have left all and followed thee. Jesus said, Verily, I say to thee, there is no one who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses, etc., with persecution, and in the world to come everlasting life. But many who are last, shall be first, and the first last." (Mark x, 29-31.)

These words of Jesus were literally fulfilled when a man became a Christian, he entered a society which gave him most things he had abandoned. He was not left to starve, and he found people to take the place of the family he had abandoned. The one drawback was "with persecutions."

Was persecution a deterrent?

Was this a drawback in the sense that it made people unwilling to join the Church? It undoubtedly kept many luke-warm and interested would-be proselytes outside; but to many the prospect of persecution was an actual inducement to embrace Christianity. The reason is not far to seek. In the first place, any intense love makes those who feel it desirous to prove it by sacrifice. This the Christians unquestionably felt for their Master. Many therefore sought, and rejoiced in, martyrdom as a proof of their devotion. They believed that no sacrifice was so acceptable to God as death by martyrdom, and the reward

of those who endured manfully for Christ was sure. The Church did everything to encourage the steadfastness of the martyr. From the time of his arrest he was the object of constant solicitation. The prisons were besieged by Christians anxious to behold the man or woman about to die for the faith. If he remained steadfast, and witnessed to Christ by his death, he was a martyr. He knew he would be buried, if possible, with every honour; that the faithful would spend nights at prayer at his tomb, and, above all, that at his death angels would convey his soul to Paradise.

Confessors

If the death penalty were remitted, despite his refusal to worship idols, he attained to the lesser dignity of a confessor, and would be regarded by the Church with the highest veneration as one bearing in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. On the other hand, if he failed in the trial, he was irretrievably disgraced in the eyes of his brethren, before whom he knew he could never lift up his head again. He had, then, both kinds of inducements, of hope and of fear, to persevere to the end.

Dulness of ordinary life

Another less noble incentive for people to become Christians and then to risk their lives, was a factor which is scarcely suspected by most people today. But for the rise of Christianity the first centuries of our era would be the dreariest in history. Few realise how peaceful, how well administered, how carefully organised, life was under the Empire. The entire Roman army, which sufficed to keep the Roman world in tranquillity, was less numerous than the fighting force of a single Balkan state today. When Rome contained some two millions of inhabitants there were not five hundred thousand men under arms in the entire Empire, and these were dispersed in a thin line

along its enormous frontier. In many places there was hardly a soldier to be seen. Civilians were forbidden to carry weapons; the armies were recruited mainly from the more barbarous frontiermen. Goths, Scythians, Arabs, who were born outside the Roman territory, were accepted in the legions. Despite the good government of most emperors,—and the tyranny of the worst seldom extended far beyond their entourage,—trade was declining, land going out of cultivation, and population shrinking. There was very little literature produced; our material for the history of the period is but scanty, and when the law often confined a man to residence in the city in which he was born there were few openings for adventure. There were no discoveries in science, and no new lands were being opened up. The tendency was to keep every one in the same place and at the occupation to which he was born, and, as taxation was becoming heavier every day, life was often a descent from comparative affluence to utter poverty. Seldom, if ever, can it have been less interesting to the average man. Christianity supplied an object for existence. It set up a moral standard worth striving after; it gave men an institution in the Church worth working for with pride; it held out hopes of happiness hereafter, and filled its people with a sense of romance. It was a warfare when all around was dreary, purposeless peace; and it was something worth dying a hero's death to defend.

Literature of martyrdom

To understand the spirit of martyrdom, a variety of documents relating to the subject must be studied and, so much romance hangs round the tales of sufferings for the faith, that it is necessary to exercise much discrimination. Those chosen here are of undoubted antiquity, even if their genuineness is disputed.

Ignatius

The first and earliest are the *Epistles* of Ignatius, who, in the reign of Trajan, was sent from Antioch, where he was bishop, to be exposed to the beasts at Rome. A long controversy has raged round these letters, with the result that the seven mentioned by Eusebius are now generally recognised as genuine. Ignatius expresses his burning desire for martyrdom in his letter to the Roman Church. As in *I Clement* there is no allusion to its bishop. The Roman Christians are wealthy and influential, and Ignatius fears they may obtain a pardon for him. In language, which would seem exaggerated, were it not for the circumstances, the prospective martyr entreats them to allow him to win the honor of dying for Christ. If the beasts are unwilling, he will coax them to kill him, etc., etc. Nothing can be more characteristic of a desire for martyrdom which often was carried to excess. The Church had to exercise the greatest care to prevent fanatical and suicidal martyrdoms, and to stop the zeal of fanatics whose imprudence forced the heathen to persecute the Church. The title of martyr was in fact most sparingly bestowed. Even a pope who had been put to death did not obtain it till after investigation.

Martyrdom of Polycarp

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* at Smyrna is remarkable for the evident desire shown to make it a parallel to the story of the Crucifixion, and for the grace and dignity displayed by the ancient saint, and the excessive malignity of the Jews towards the Christians on the occasion. The whole chapter of Eusebius' history which quotes the letter of the Church of Smyrna to that of Philomelium, should be read. At so early a date (A.D. 156) it is interesting to notice that the relics of a martyr were already prized, for after saying that they insisted

on burning the body to ashes, fearing that the Christians would worship Polycarp instead of Christ, and indignantly repudiating the idea, the letter goes on to say, "We gathered up his bones, which are more prized than precious stones and more approved than gold, and placed them where it was suitable. There, when it is possible, the Lord will permit us to assemble in exultation and joy and celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have contended before us, and for the discipline and encouragement of those who shall hereafter contend."

Martyr Spirit at Lyons and Vienne

The spirit of martyrdom is displayed in its most favourable light in the account of the sufferings at Lyons and Vienne already alluded to: in this, as will be shown, there is a conspicuous absence of an arrogance, too often displayed in some of the later martyrdoms.

The martyrs of Lyons seem to have been more brutally treated than elsewhere; but the way in which the story is told is devoid of bitterness, and the following points deserve attention. Great fear was felt lest any of those brought before the judges should fall away at the last, as the tortures were not merely designed to make them deny Christ, but to implicate the others in the charges popularly made against the Christians. Some who had denied Christ and offered sacrifice were again put to the torture, as was Biblias, evidently a slave, but she this time refused to say anything, and seemed in a deep sleep under her tortures. When she recovered from her stupor she confessed herself a Christian and was added to the order of martyrs (lit., the clergy, *clerus,* of martyrs). The sufferings of those who remained steadfast had the effect of inspiring many who had renounced the faith. Some, when about to obtain the release, declared them-

selves to be Christians, and were beheaded if they were Roman citizens. The protagonists were the slave girl Blandina, and a boy named Ponticus, aged fifteen. They were tortured in the arena in the most terrible manner, Blandina being the very last to perish, encouraging the others to persevere as she hung on her cross. She was regarded by the sufferers not as a slave but as a well-born (*eugenes*) mother. The deaths of the martyrs were regarded by the Church as the offering of a crown of flowers to God, the various colours signifying the variety of their deaths.

Martyrdom of Justin

A much drier and more formal account, illustrative of the sort of answers made by the accused Christians, is the record of the death of Justin (probably the well-known apologist) and his companion at Rome. The origin of the document is unknown, but its very baldness is a testimony to its genuine antiquity. The holy men were brought before the prefect of Rome, Rusticus.—Rusticus said to Justin, "Obey the Gods at once and sacrifice to the emperor." Justin said, "To obey the commandments of our Saviour Jesus Christ is worthy neither of blame nor of condemnation." Rusticus then asked Justin as to his doctrine. Then follows an examination. *Rusticus,* "Where do you assemble?" *Justin,* "Where one chooses and can: for do you fancy we all meet in the very same place, etc., etc." *Rusticus,* "Where do you assemble and in what place do you collect your followers?" *Justin,* "I live above one Martinus, at the Timotimian Bath: and during the whole time (I am now living at Rome for the second time) I am unaware of any other meeting than his. And if any one wished to come to me, I communicated to him the doctrines of the truth." *Rusticus,* "Are you not then a Christian?" *Justin,* "Yes,

I am a Christian." Then the companions of Justin were examined in the same manner. All acknowledged they were Christians. Finally Rusticus said, "Having come together, offer sacrifice with one accord to the gods." *Justin,* "Do what you will, no one falls away from piety to impiety." Rusticus warns them what will happen if they disobey, and then sentences them to be scourged and beheaded. It is noticeable here that the Church is not mentioned. Justin apparently is a stranger in Rome, teaching independently of any organization. This is an indication of the archaic character of the account.

Perpetua

The last martyrdom to be considered is the beautiful one of Perpetua and her companions. It is important as an example of the intense fervour of the martyr spirit. In prison Perpetua has a succession of visions; and for this reason it is suggested that the martyrs were Montanists, not orthodox Christians. They were not treated with anything approaching the cruelty shown to the martyrs of Lyons, though their deaths entailed the usual sufferings of those exposed in the arena. Indeed, when they refused to wear heathen costumes in the arena, and said they were dying because they would not comply, *Agnovit inìustitia iusticiam,* and they were not compelled to put them on. The whole story is a revelation of the martyr spirit at its best.

Abuses of martyrdom

That it was not always so amiable or disinterested is clear. Hippolytus relates how his rival, Callistus, sought to atone for or conceal his frauds by trying to provoke martyrdom for disturbing the service of a synagogue. Eulalia, the patron saint of Merida, or Barcelona, rushed into the court and struck or even spat in the face of the presiding magistrate. Lucian, the satirist, describes the

impostor, Alexander of Abonoteichus, becoming a Christian and getting thrown into prison in order to be fed, and cherished by the pious solicitude of his dupes. But these must be regarded as blemishes, perhaps inevitable in the noble record of the Church.

The Roman Empire failed to crush the Church partly because this form of passive resistance made the rulers unwilling to persist, and the heroism of the martyrs won more converts than the preaching of the Gospel itself. As Tertullian truly said, "their blood was their seed." It is significant that in the first days it was the mob who clamoured for the execution of Christians, and that the martyrdoms were less popular when the government took the suppression of the Church seriously in hand.

Effect of the persecutions on the development of the Church

The martyr age had much influence on the way in which the Faith ultimately developed and a few ways in which this did so may now be indicated. The martyr spirit protested against the entire religious policy of the Empire, which tried, first to regulate, and afterwards to tolerate all faiths, on condition that they did not molest one another. The Christians, it is true, discouraged open molestation of the heathen worship, but their conduct when they were in power showed that they were unable to allow any religion but their own. This, in the age of persecution, was shown in their refusal to yield a single point in deference to the general desire to pay divine honours in any sense to Rome and the emperor. The antagonism between Church and State never really ceased, and became acute in western medieval Europe.

Schisms due to persecution

Persecution had the effect first of uniting, and then of disintegrating, the Church. The common danger drove

the Christians together; they rallied under their bishops; they organized themselves in the Catholic Church. After a while, however, every persecution resulted in schism. The question arose as to who had been faithful and who had apostatised; who ought to continue in the Church, and who had forfeited his claim to communion. Investigations were held, odious recriminations were made, and parties split off from the Church. Novatianism, Donatism, and the Meletian Schism in Egypt, all arose after days of persecution.

Veneration of martyrs

The just admiration for the martyr was succeeded by an extravagant belief in his power to save. By death he had become an influence in heaven, and even before it he was first accorded, and then claimed the right, to interfere in the discipline of the Church. The story of Cyprian reveals the trials of a bishop who desired to keep his flock united, in the face of those who wished those awaiting martyrdom to be arbiters of the situation. In the end, the superstitious veneration for martyrdom led to the worst abuses of saint worship and vicarious atonement for the sins of weaker Christians.

Finally, martyrdom proved an outlet for Christian zeal, and, when it was no longer possible to obtain it, other channels had to be found. With its disappearance the most earnest believers sought the solitude of the desert and a life of self-torture. The hermit, the ascetic, and the monk became the successors of the martyr.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHURCH AND OTHER RELIGIONS

The Hebrew, Greek and Latin genius

The inscription on the Cross was in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. This is profoundly significant, for in the conflict of religions in the years which followed the establishment of the Roman world domination these were the three religious elements which moulded the faith of western humanity. Of these the Semitic was the most ancient, and also the most vital. It is the basis of the great active, as opposed to contemplative, religions of mankind, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. It is hardly too much to say that to it the world owes, almost entirely, the conception of one Personal God. The Greek genius was philosophical rather than religious: it busied itself at first with the problem of the natural world; it made politics into a science, and ethics into a system. It raised the problems of existence and taught men how to think. The Roman, profoundly influenced and attracted as he was by Greek ideas, had more in common with the Jew. Both were fundamentally practical: the Jew looked to a God who would, if only His Law were obeyed, grant prosperity, and the Roman gods were the virtues which made states prosperous, and the forces of nature which made the land fertile. Rome's real contribution to religion was his natural sense of the importance of law. God, theology, and an organised Church made up the threefold inheritance of Christianity, due to its Hebrew, Greek, and Roman elements. The three

are each of them necessary to the existence of our religion. Judaism, as we know it, originated with the captivity: Greek philosophy became all powerful during the struggle with Persia, and the Roman influence began to be world-wide after the vicissitudes of defeat and victory during the Second Punic War. A great national crisis moulded the destiny of each people.

Roman religion

The religion of Rome was essentially that of an established church, and possessed all the qualities of a state religion. It was eminently sensible and aimed at promoting morality and the civic virtues generally. It was regulated by *senatus consulta,* and discouraged enthusiasm. It was closely bound up with the ancient religion; it was designed exclusively for Roman citizens; its survivals of remote antiquity were regulated by common sense. When alarming portents occurred, the Senate took prompt action, and alleviated the public anxiety by a *lectisternium* or a *supplicatio.* But established churches have never satisfied the devouter minds, who want something more personal and less official. Accordingly, no sooner did Rome come into contact with the East, than a desire was felt for its more emotional forms of worship.

Image of Cybele sent for to Rome

The Second Punic War is an example of how a nation which can endure defeat can secure victory in the end. Hannibal crossed the Alps in B.C. 218 and descended into Italy, and so completely out-generalled the Romans that they could not meet him without being almost annihilated, and by B.C. 216, the year of the Battle of Cannae, their cause seemed hopeless. Then, slowly and almost imperceptibly, the tide began to turn. Three critical years were marked by intense religious excitement, which the Senate repeatedly tried to allay. At last, in B.C. 205, the

Sibylline Books declared that, if the "image"—a meteoric stone—of Cybele, the Great Mother, were brought to Rome, Hannibal would be finally expelled from Italy. An embassy was sent to Attalus, King of Pergamus, who consented to its removal. The goddess arrived at Ostia and was met by Scipio and the noblest matrons of the city. From Ostia she was conducted in triumph to the Capitol. In B.C. 202, the Battle of Zama was fought, and in the next year the Second Punic War was at an end, and Rome was the first power in the world.

This is one of the great crises in the history of religion. The people who were about to dominate the earth had no religion themselves to support them in a great trial, much less which they could impose on the nations they were about to subdue. On the contrary, they had to borrow their religion and civilisation from the conquered peoples.

One God sought

The Hellenic and Italian worlds had consisted of city states, all self-contained, independent, and often at war with one another. Each city, including Rome, had its own gods. The first blow at this condition of things was due to the conquests of Alexander the Great. The East had long witnessed the rise and fall of empires, a number of nations reduced to subjection under the monarch of some conquering race, who was literally a king of kings. Alexander, by his amazing military successes, became a potentate of the oriental type; and those who came after him each was recognised as the head of a smaller empire of his own. These Macedonian monarchs claimed to be, and were recognised as, worthy of divine honours. In the second century B.C., the Romans were annexing the possessions of the Diadochi, and paving the way for a consolidation of the ancient world under a single rule.

All this was tending towards the idea of world-wide gods, in place of the local city or tribal deities. The most famous of these was Serapis, whose temple in the new city of Alexandria was founded by Ptolemy Soter: and its destruction in the reign of Theodosius the Great marked the fall of Egyptian paganism. The face of Serapis, the last great production of Athenian art, is that of a benevolent despot, the ruler of the world, Lord of fertility above, and of the regions below the surface of the earth.

Personal religion found in the worship of Cybele

The introduction of the worship of Cybele at Rome, and of Serapis at Alexandria, expresses the new tendencies of the religion of the world at the time of the close of its city states. Both took place in the second century B.C. The worship of Cybele was a personal rather than a national religion. It appealed to the emotions, and to the deepest of human sympathies. She was an awful, eastern goddess. When the wind roared amid the pines, it seemed as though she was driving through them in her car drawn by lions. She was also sorrowing for her mate, Attis; and this caused her worship to combine sentiment with terror. Her priests were not official, like those of the Roman gods, but clergy in the modern sense of men, wholly devoted to worship and set apart from others. They practised self-mutilation, like some modern Russian sects; and led a worship which was orgiastic in the extreme. The dignified Romans disliked the introduction of this new religion, which offended their sense of decorum; but it became increasingly popular, especially among the women, and was firmly established.

Isis

It was followed by that of Isis, whose ritual was even more appealing to the imagination, as was the story of

her sorrowful search for Osiris, her husband, who had been torn in pieces by Typhon, the evil one, and whose body she recovered. These exciting forms of worship, with their personal appeal, became more and more attractive as the old Roman spirit declined.

Serapis

Serapis, the mysterious god, brought to Alexandria by Ptolemy I, appealed to another desire of the time. Now that men were becoming less divided into petty states, they wanted a deity common to all. The disappearance of civic nationality made for monotheism, and the knowledge of many religions drove men to believe that there was one god under various names. Serapis seemed to satisfy the requirement.

Need for purification

With this desire for a personal contact with the deity, and the tendency to unify the idea of God, there was also a sense of individual guilt, and a desire for purification. This had doubtless a noble aspect, and was an advance in religious consciousness; but there was another side. Guilt was that which had incurred the displeasure of a god; and the god need not be essentially moral. To appease his anger, the thing was to perform the correct ceremonies, to be in the correct ritual condition, and to use the correct formula. But in these religions it was at least something gained that there were purificatory rites, because these made, however imperfectly, for personal religion. The most famous of these was the *taurobolium* or *criobolium,* the sacrifice of a bull or ram, whose blood was allowed to fall upon the person who sought to be cleansed from sin. Those who submitted to it were born again, sometimes for a period of years, at others forever, for we find the expression *in æternum renatus*—reborn for eternity.

The future life

The ancients were signally indifferent as to the life to come. In this the Hebrews were in agreement with the rest of the world. *Hades, Sheol,* or whatever it was called, was so dreary a place that it could be of no interest to any man. This life was the chief thing after all. The exception was the Egyptian religion. This was directed to salvation after death from the judgment which awaited the sinner. Osiris guided the soul through the nether world, where his good and bad deeds were weighed in a just balance and his fate decided. The Osiris myth in itself was a lesson in death and resurrection. When men began to turn to the faiths of the East, they began to desire in some way to triumph over death and to seek a religion which would enable them to do so.

Persia

It is sometimes forgotten that though one often speaks of the Roman Empire as world-wide, it had always one formidable rival against which it strove with varying success: first the Parthian, and afterward the restored Persian Empire, strove with the armies of Rome, not by any means always in favour of the western power. Indeed the most terrible defeats of the Roman army occurred when they attacked or were attacked by the great eastern power. It was a spiritual contest as well, and the religion of Iran invaded the dominion of Rome. In later days it became the most formidable rival of the Christian Church.

Mithras

The form in which Persian influence made itself felt was in the worship of Mithras. This cult was introduced from Cilicia when Pompey destroyed the pirates. It spread rapidly in the Latin world, never among the

Greeks. Its morality was higher than that of any of the eastern religions. It was preëminently the soldier's religion, with its strong dualism, its good and evil spirits in eternal conflict. Wherever the Roman army went, it was accompanied by the worship of Mithras, with its initiations, its degrees of perfection, its sacraments, so like the Christian that the Fathers said the demons had imitated them. It was the most formidable rival to Christianity; and just before the final triumph of Christianity, Diocletian, in whose time was the great persecution, took Mithras as his god, as Constantine later did Christ.

Astrology

One of the latest forms of idolatry adopted by the Israelites before the Captivity was that of the Host of Heaven. This was but natural when they became acquainted with the valley of the Euphrates, where the study of the motions of the heavenly bodies was most ardently pursued. The Babylonian priesthood undoubtedly carried on their observations as scientifically as possible, and thus far they were correct; but it was also believed that there was a close correspondence between the stars and human life, and that the affairs of this world were determined by the stars. Hence came astrology, which, though not itself a religion, was destined for many centuries to be a potent influence on thought, and man has to a certain degree remained under its spell to this day. The augur retired into the background, and the astrologer took his place. Astrology was considered a profound science, and was called the "queen of the sciences," and people were warned against impostors as they are now against dope doctors. Only those who had really studied it seriously should be consulted. In Babylonia was a preëminently priestly affair. The arguments

in favour of it were urged with skill and fervour. There was harmony in heaven and earth. The stars were (even the Christians admitted this) sentient beings who watched over the destinies of men. All things depended on their position in the firmament. This was the clue to the Stoic doctrine of recurrence. When all things returned to their exact position the course of the world's history would repeat itself. Thus fatalism became deeply ingrained in most people who believed that they were under an inexorable destiny, controlled by the stars. For this, among other reasons, the Christians strongly asserted the freedom of the will, or at least so much as to ensure the realisation that man is morally responsible for his actions and in a measure for his future destiny. In the Gentile world the philosophers taught that a man could rise above fate by moral qualities; but the popular belief was that this could be accomplished by mystic ceremonies.

Magic

With astrology, and also from the East, as its name implied, came magic, the practise of the *magi*—the priesthood of Persia. The magician was to be found everywhere, among the highest and the lowest. Every new find of papyri seems to contain incantations and magic spells. The Jews were prominent among the wonder workers from the East. They were half-despised and half-feared for their strange religion, and their worship of an unnamed God. They appear in Acts as rivals of the first preachers of the Gospel, as exorcists and magicians, working miracles. This is confirmed by the Latin satirists, and by the recurrence of Hebrew names in magic formula. Doubtless this greatly increased the influence of Judaism in the world under the empire.

Mysteries

The Mystery Religions played their part in the religious changes of the age. The sense that there were secrets which those who were worthy alone could know; the rites, which turned generally upon death and the triumph over death, and were progressive, leading the neophyte to the knowledge of one great secret after another; the ordeals, by which his fortitude was tested; the sense of responsibility to the order to which he belonged, were all attractive to those who desired in religion something, not official, but personal. Further, they prepared many for the idea of a church as a social organisation. Strangely enough the worship of the emperor had not a little to do with paving the way for a very different religion. The worship of men in their lifetime was Greek, and is first heard of when the Greek cities erected altars and burnt sacrifices to the Spartan Lysander. It was discouraged by Augustus, who would not allow it in Italy, but permitted it in the provinces. Priesthoods were organised, temples erected, fraternities were formed to worship the genius of Rome and Cæsar; and the culture became a means of unifying the Empire.

Why Christianity triumphed

One of the great problems in the history of the Church is whether Christianity was no more than one of the many religions which were striving for the mastery in the Roman world. After all it was, like many others, an oriental faith which began in obscurity, then rivalled and finally supplanted the other faiths; and it is easy to speak as if it were only a trifle better than the best of them, of Mithraism for example. It is easy to use fine phrases to explain away Christianity; to describe it as a "synthesis," or a "complex," but it leaves us no nearer what we want to know, namely, why it conquered the

world and became the basis of a better civilisation than that of the ancient empire. The coldest historical critic must admit that it did more than any of the religions which entered into competition with it, and all that can here be done is to indicate wherein it excelled all the systems touched on in this chapter.

1. It supplied the emotional element which the religions of Asia Minor ministered, but transferred the object to one whose character and teaching was utterly opposed to the orgiastic and immoral worship of the Great Mother.

2. Mankind craved someone to worship who had been himself a sufferer, and who could thus be in sympathy with men. They feared death, and longed to be assured that they could triumph over it. The Isis and Osiris cults gave this assurance, but the example of Jesus, not in remote antiquity, but in the time of "Pontius Pilate" supplied it tenfold.

3. Astronomy taught the wonder of the universe, but astrology drove men into the prison house of fatalism, from which Christianity delivered them.

4. Magic, at its best, warded off the demons of which men were so afraid. Christianity's substitute was faith in Jesus.

5. The worship of the emperor encouraged the idea of the unity of the human race. The Church united all nations in brotherhood, both in this world and the next; and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that even the corrupt religions at the time of Christ helped to prepare the way for Him.

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER PHILOSOPHIES

In what sense Christianity was a philosophy

Christianity was often spoken of as a "philosophy," as was Judaism. True, many Christians disliked the term. It is but once used in the New Testament, and is coupled with "vain deceit." Nor is this to be wondered at. Philosophy is a human thing, the wisdom of this world; the Gospel of Christ is rightly described as "a power of God unto salvation," and these are in natural antagonism to one another. But despite this, Christianity was a philosophy in the sense that it was a rule of life, and also because, having certain dogmas to maintain, it was compelled to employ the language of philosophy in their defense. Moreover, as the thought of the age was expressed in terms of philosophy, it naturally affected the language and through it the conceptions of the Church. When Paul went to Athens he was encountered by Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, and in his speech on the Areopagus he alludes to the dogma of the Epicureans, "God needs nothing," and quotes the Stoic poet who says, "For we are his offspring." The author of Acts, in his brief account of the visit of the apostle to Athens, and the still briefer summary of the "apology" put into his mouth, introduces us to the two great popular philosophers of the age when the Church made its appearance.

Epicurus

Epicurus has given his name to words which in many languages are synonymous with self-indulgence. To us,

an *epicure* signifies one who is fastidious about food and drink. In later Hebrew, the *Epicurosin* were the atheists who preferred the delights of this world to the practise of the law of God. Horace speaks of "the pig out of the herd of Epicurus." Yet Epicurus, the Athenian, taught that wise moderation and contentment were the secrets of happiness, and the noblest of scientific poems on the *Nature of Things* was the work of the Roman poet Lucretius, who speaks of his master in rapturous terms as the man who freed mankind from the cruel tyranny of superstition. A brief description of the origin and principles of his philosophy are not out of place.

The "Garden" at Athens

Epicurus gathered around him a large school at Athens, and having purchased a garden in the city taught his classes in it, so that his system is often called that of "the Garden." Living in the later half of the fourth century B.C. at a time when an Athenian had little hope of doing effective public work, his natural temperament made Epicurus indisposed to a quixotic philosophy. His motto was "live in obscurity," and his ideal happiness was absence of anxiety. He appears to have been very temperate in his life, a good friend, and even a good citizen. He was greatly beloved by his many pupils. His boast was that he had evolved his own philosophy, which accepted the existence of the gods, but maintained that they led an existence, untroubled by the affairs of men; and he taught that the universe was due to the fortuitous contact of atoms falling through space.

Lucretius

Were it not for Lucretius this system would be little known. The poet does not profess to give all the teachings of his master, but to insist that, as it is, man is made

miserable by the terrors of superstition which threatens him with hell; that the popular religion is an incentive to evil rather than good; and that happiness consists in learning what science has to teach as to the origin of nature. The interesting thing about Lucretius is that he proclaims a doctrine purely materialistic with the fervour of a prophet, and pleads with all his powers of persuasion to men to forsake the dreams of religion for the certainties of science. The age of Lucretius, in the last days of the Roman Republic, was one of complete scepticism among the upper classes. The old Roman religion had failed, and nothing but oriental superstitions or an entire neglect of the gods was there to take its place. The temples were neglected and were falling into decay. It appeared as though the day of Roman *pietas* had closed forever.

Religious revival under Augustus

Then came the religious revival under Augustus. The emperor appealed, and not in vain, to the spiritual instincts of his people, who vied with one another in restoring the ancient worship. The magnificent secular games of B.C. 17, to which the poets Horace, Tibullus, Ovid, all lent their aid roused enthusiasm; and Virgil set before the world an ideal of duty and devotion, which, even more than his *Fourth Eclogue,* foreshadowed the coming of the Christian spirit into the world. In Stoicism a more moral and less material philosophy had been introduced.

Zeno and Stoicism

It is perhaps no accident that Zeno was a native of Cyprus, the Kittim of Scripture; for his philosophy has something akin to the zeal for righteousness of the old Hebrew prophet. There is no need to go at length into the system of the Stoics: sufficient to say that their stern

teaching as to duty, and of the self-sufficiency of the truly wise man who, should stand relying on his virtue in face of all calamities, appealed to the Romans ever since the intercourse between the younger Scipio and his friends with the Stoic Panætius towards the close of the second century B.C. From that time a sort of modified stoicism was the favourite philosophy of the Romans, who gave it a decidedly practical direction. Under its influence not merely the study of law, but of its meaning and purpose, and of the higher justice, attracted the Roman lawyer. Natural law, applicable to the whole race of man, began to be recognised. A greater humanity tended to mitigate the cruelty of the ancient law of slavery, as the rights of man began increasingly to be recognised.

Seneca

This is displayed especially in Seneca, whose utterances betray a liberal spirit marking a new age, which causes so uncompromising a Christian as Tertullian, himself a lawyer, to describe him as "often one of us" (*saepe noster*).

Plutarch

In Plutarch, the famous biographer of antiquity, appears the attempt of ancient paganism to adjust itself to new conditions. He is one of the most amiable characters in all antiquity, a man who had travelled widely and studied much, but preferred a life of quiet usefulness at his beloved home at Cheronæa in Boeotia to any honours the world could give. He was a teacher of morality by example and precept, and his highest aim appears to have been the improvement of his fellow-men. Deeply interested in the old religion of Hellas,—he was a priest at Delphi—he could not fail to notice the absurdity, and even immorality of many of its myths; but instead of relinquishing it on that account he sought to give its

fables a deeper meaning than was apparent at first sight. This is seen in his book on the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, the very subject of which proves his tendency to the religious syncretism of his age. He endeavoured to secure the purity of the Supreme Being by making the *demons,* the gods and heroes of ancient Greece, the media of communication with mankind. He is forced to admit the existence of an evil spirit in the world; but he does not consider, as many of his contemporaries did, that matter is necessary evil. Plutarch's genius is too practical in being primarily interested in moral conduct, for him to be ranked among the great philosophers. He cannot speak harshly of a superstition which fosters virtue. There is a good deal of religious conservatism of the modern type in him. Too highly cultured to be able to accept the absurdities of the old faith, he is prepared, not to jettison it altogether, but to adapt it to the more enlightened spirit of his age. He is in a sense a pioneer of the movement which was about to come from Alexandria.

Celsus' attack on the Christians

The first points of contact between philosophy and Christianity appear in the age of the Antonines, in what is called the Plato-Pythagorean system. Of Celsus, the literary opponent of the new religion, it is scarcely necessary to say much here, as he will demand attention when we deal with Christian apologetic, and the same applies to Fronto of Cirta.

Neo-Platonism

The philosopher who paved the way for *Neo-Platonism,* which acted and reacted so greatly on Christian thought, was Numenius of Apamea. With him we enter upon a new phase in speculative philosophy, which approaches to theology. In one respect Numenius was modern, as he wanted to get behind systems as accepted in order to find

the true Pythagoras and Plato behind the doctrines which bear their names. He desires to collect the wisdom of all the nations, Persia, Egypt, India; and he has a high respect for the Jews, and especially for Moses. Origen says that, without naming Him, he honoured Jesus. The system of Numenius has some decidedly Gnostic traits. The supreme God does nothing: he is inactive (*argos*). The second God is the active being, and is good. He is the Creator. True to the Pythagorean philosophy, which pays the greatest attention to number, Numenius has his Triad, the Being who presides over things spiritual (*noëta*); the Creator, who is twofold, in that he has to do with the spiritual and phenomenal; the World is the third God. But these are not in any sense equal.

We may pass by the moral philosophers, like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, because important as is their teaching in its similarity to, and difference from, that of the Christians, the present purpose is to enquire how the speculations of the age bore on its theology.

Alexandria

The capital of thought was undoubtedly Alexandria; where assuredly the genius of the Christian Origen had provided a stimulus alike to Christians and heathens. The Christian religion was in process of forming a highly systematised scheme of doctrine, explaining its fundamental dogmas in the current language of the time. And as religion was becoming more and more of a philosophy, so philosophy tended to be increasingly religious, especially by the adoption of mystical methods of approaching God, the great Ultimate Reality. In the death struggle between the old and the new faiths, which culminated in the Diocletian persecution, each became more and more like the other, and it is no exaggeration to say that Neo-Platonism survived in Christianity.

Ammonius Saccas

The founder of this philosophy was Ammonius Saccas, who is said to have been originally a Christian. Nothing of his writings has survived, and he lived only in his disciple Plotinus, who, when he first heard him, exclaimed, "This is the man I am looking for." Christians are mentioned as attending his lectures, among them Origen, who must not be confounded with a heathen Origen, who was a favourite disciple and one of the successors of Ammonius.

The Neoplatonic

Alexandria had long been the home of mysticism, allegorism, and asceticism. Philo and the Therapeutæ, Clement and Origen, all practiced or advocated these. The new school sought for the vision of God; and, in their adaptation of the teaching of Pythagoras, initiated his life of self-discipline, explained the old religion by allegory, and perhaps adopted somewhat of the teaching of the Christian Catechetical School. Their doctrine of reality was Platonic, but in practice they were attracted more than the philosophers of antiquity by the miraculous. In prayerfulness, meditation and the like, they rivalled the Christians.

Plotinus

Plotinus himself is not disposed to the miraculous side of Neo-Platonism. Though he says he was vouchsafed the Beatific Vision, he never tried in any way to bring himself deliberately into an ecstatic condition. The system of Plotinus is trinitarian. The three Divine Principles are the Absolute, Spirit, and the Soul (*psyche*). Man consists of Spirit, Soul, and Body. Matter (*hyle*) is not in itself evil, it is the thing on which mind works. Plotinus is absolutely against the Gnostic notion that this

visible material world is evil. It is on the contrary part of one harmonious whole. What is material, however, has no true existence (*ousia*). That belongs to God, the ineffable, alone, and does not exist in the world of sense. Thus we have the word *ousia,* later adopted and bitterly disputed in the Church, in the sense, not of anything we connect with substance, but of ultimate reality.

The doctrine of Resurrection

It is of great interest to us to see how the Christians and Neo-Platonists of Alexandria faced the great difficulty of life after death. Origen, a Platonist in his philosophy and a Christian by conviction, had before him the problem of reconciling the highly idealistic views of his school with the somewhat crass materialism of the popular faith. In their anxiety to safeguard the truths that man is wholly God's, and that he owes not only his spirit and his soul to the Creator, but his body also, and that Christ is actually the Saviour of the body, they made their doctrine of Resurrection almost repulsively material. Origen and Clement as far as possible shelve the discussion of a bodily resurrection, or, following Paul, explain it as something of a more spiritual nature. To Plotinus this difficulty does not occur; he believes in the natural immortality of the soul. It has neither beginning nor end. There is no need of Paul's "spiritual body." At death the soul awakens from the body. Here the Neo-Platonists and the Christian part. To the one the future life is a theory, to the other a revealed fact. To some of us the philosopher has the advantage; but it is not by theories, but by facts that the world is gained.

Porphyry's life of Plotinus

The scene of Plotinus' teaching was Rome; but he professes that he only reproduced that of his master Am-

monius Saccas, the Alexandrian porter, who by his native genius had become a philosopher, being, as was claimed for him, taught of God. Porphyry, who sat under Plotinus in his later years, gives a singularly attractive portrait of his master. He seems to have been modest and unassuming, singularly patient with his pupils, fond of children, scrupulous as a trustee of the property of others. He was a lecturer rather than a writer: and but for his unattractive style it has been declared that he would have perhaps been recognised as a thinker equal, if not superior, to Plato.

The Church and the philosophers

Between the best moral writers of Greece and Rome and those of the Church in the first days of Christianity, there may seem to be some difficulty in awarding the palm. The philosophers on both sides have also a strong family likeness. It is necessary to go deeper than their expressed opinions on righteousness and the relation of man to God. But when we have done so, the difference is that Christian ethics and speculations have manifestly a power which does not manifest itself in rival systems. There is something virile in early Christianity which is lacking in the whole of later paganism. Origen had an enthusiasm which is not found in the philosophers. To him the world was being redeemed by Christ; to them, as to all outward observers, it was going steadily downward. The philosopher sought to withdraw from active life in order to reflect on the sublime, but when the Christian fled the world and hid in the desert it was to fight with Satan there. When Plotinus was trying to found in the abandoned Campania, a city of philosophers, a Platonopolis, the Christians were striving to establish the City of God on earth.

CHAPTER XV

THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS

Defect of all "apologies"

In a sense apologetic is the most unsatisfactory literature in the world. It is argument in favour of a religion, and to be convincing it must be directed to the objections raised at the time it is composed. It must also use the arguments most persuasive at the particular period. Nor is it the object of the apologist to advance a defense too logical to be appreciated by those to whom it is addressed. The object, for example, of the apologist who addressed Hadrian, was to persuade that emperor that the Christians were harmless folk who ought not to be persecuted. If his arguments convinced the emperor, they were good, because they effected the purpose for which they were adduced. They may seem absurd or illogical to us; but as we cannot issue rescripts ordering persecution to cease, and Hadrian could, this matters nothing. In estimating an apology, those to whom it is addressed, and the circumstances, must be taken into account; and we have no right to expect that it will or, indeed ought, always to appeal to us.

Why they are still important

On the other hand, if we approach the study of the apologies in the spirit of historical inquirers, they will prove full of interest. They will reveal the feelings of each side, what inspired one, and provoked the other. Light will be thrown on the manners, customs, and ideas

of a bygone age; and we shall be able better to appreciate its thought by this means almost than by any other. Were it not for the apologies, we should know but little of the actual Christian life of the second and third centuries. Fortunately the apologists provide us with some of the arguments advanced by the heathen against the Christians.

New Testament Apologetic

The New Testament contains much apologetic material, in the sense of defense of the Christians before the heathen world. The tone of the Acts is apologetic throughout, especially in the later portion; but there are echoes of it also in the Gospels. The passion of Jesus is related with two objects: that of proving to the Jews that all happened in accordance with Scripture, and that of showing to the Gentiles that He was innocent in the eyes of Pilate, the Roman governor. It cannot be accidental that each of the four evangelists insists on the desire of Pilate to release Jesus, because He was guiltless of any crime against the Romans; and that, despite the danger which every prominent man under Tiberius ran of the least suspicion of treason, he rejected the charge that Jesus had claimed to be a king. That the purpose was to show that no reasonable man, even though he were a corrupt official, could believe that Jesus was an enemy of Rome, is borne out by the very early Christian story that Pilate reported the wonderful works of Christ to Tiberius, who, but for the opposition of the senate, would have declared Him to be a god.

Christians insist that they are disloyal to government

From a Jewish standpoint, Jesus would have been much more likely to be recognised as Messiah had He declared Himself on the national side; but His undeniable detachment from the political and nationalist aspirations of the

time was a strong argument to the Roman government of the harmless character of His doctrine. The same thing appears in the Acts. Here, the persecutions which the Christians underwent are represented as illegal, and the charges made against Paul by Jews or Gentiles as ridiculous. When one analyses the book, it is remarkable how much of it is occupied by attempts to show that the position of Paul was, from the Roman standpoint, absolutely legal. The speeches are in themselves condensed apologies for the Faith, and in them we see how its Jewish and Gentile adversaries are encountered.

Claim that prophecy is fulfilled

To the Jew, it was necessary to show that the life and death of Jesus was an exact fulfilment of prophecy, and that these took place "by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God" at exactly the time when the Old Covenant had reached its climax, and was completed by the appearance of Messiah. Further, it was necessary to prove that the true Israelites were not the rulers of the Jews, who, like their forefathers, were rebellious against God, but those who accepted Jesus as the Christ.

Christianity the natural religion of the good

On the other hand, the Gentiles needed to be instructed in the unreasonableness of polytheism and idolatry, and to learn that what seemed to them new and strange doctrines were the proclamation of ancient truths, to which the best teachers of the world had always testified. In other words, that Christianity was naturally the religion of all good and wise men.

The New Testament apologetic, thus briefly indicated, was the basis of the main argument advanced in later times against the heathen world; the rest of ancient apologetic being devoted to replying to the accusations made against the Church.

Aristides

The earliest apology is that of Aristides. The discovery, first of the Syriac, and later of the Greek version, is one of the most important additions to our knowledge of primitive Christianity in modern times. It is addressed to Hadrian (117-138). Mankind is divided into races, which, according to the ideas of the Near East, are determined by their religions. The Jews are the best; their worship is the most reasonable; the great fault in it is that angels are served as well as God. But a new "race" has appeared in the Christians. These are distinguished for their holy lives, and the love they bear to one another. Their belief is expressed in a very simple creed, which somewhat resembles the baptismal profession of the ancient Roman church. The favourable mention of the Jews in this apology is remarkable.

Justin Martyr

The next apologist is Justin Martyr. Like Aristides and Quadratus, who is mentioned by Eusebius with him, Justin was a philosopher, that is to say a professional teacher of wisdom. The philosopher, much more than the priest, was analogous to the modern clergyman. He dressed differently from the other men, and his modest attire, in contrast to the "dandyism" of the age, is held up as an example which fashionably-dressed Christians would do well to imitate. He wore a cloak (*pallium*), often patched and threadbare, and was usually unshaven. In accordance with a prejudice, not entirely defunct, neglect of the person, and even dirt, was associated with wisdom; and the pretender to superior knowledge could at least be a sloven. People consulted the philosopher as their adviser in matters of conscience, and submitted to his guidance. Families hired one as a kind of chaplain to instruct the children; but the most honoured gave

instruction gratis. From Justin's account of himself in the acts of his martyrdom, which have every appearance of genuineness, he associated himself with no church, but lived in a private apartment, and was ready to receive any one who came to him in search of knowledge. He published two apologies, and a dialogue with the Jew Trypho, and these represent the Christian defending his faith to Gentiles and Jews. The *Dialogue* is, if in some places tedious to us, extremely interesting as a description of how a philosopher could become a Christian. As St. Augustine found, two centuries later, Platonism was the best introduction to Christianity, and philosophy found the solution of its problems in the Faith. Acceptance of Christ is the perfection of philosophy, for He is the *Logos* who had been working for truth among mankind since the foundation of the world: the teacher of the wisdom of the Greeks and the barbarians, to whom all the sages of antiquity, whether Abraham, Moses, or Orpheus, owed their wisdom. The extremely friendly attitude of Justin to all wisdom, irrespective of its source, is in marked contrast to that of some western teachers, to whom philosophy seemed the parent of all error.

Lawyers as apologists

We enter a different atmosphere when we pass from the philosophers to the lawyers who embraced Christianity. Whether Minucius Felix flourished before or after Tertullian is here immaterial, as his apology represents a less developed condition of the argument between the Church and the heathen world.

The Octavius

The *Octavius* is one of the most graceful specimens of early Christian literature. It is a dialogue modelled on Cicero. Some Roman lawyers go to Baiæ for a day by the seashore; they walk into the sea and then watch

some boys throwing stones into the sea. They pass a statue of Serapis, and the question whether the god ought to be saluted is raised; and they sit on the breakwater to discuss it. One of them declares that Fronto of Cirta, the philosophic friend of Marcus Aurelius, declares that the Christians meet to celebrate the nocturnal orgies of popular imagination. The Christian member of the party explains what his religion really is: dwelling on its brotherliness and the purity it inculcates. Strange to say, there is no mention of Christ save one. The heathen accuses the Christian of worshipping a dead man. The reply is, "If you understood us you would not say so." The religion defended is not dogmatic but a practical Christianity, which appealed to the legal mind as a law of life.

Tertullian

The great lawyer-apologist is Tertullian. In him we have a type of Christianity allied to Puritanism. The Christianity of Africa long maintained its character for uncompromising antagonism to the pagan world. Its martyrs were the most heroic, and its controversialists the most relentless, in the early Church. It was the scene of the most bitter of schisms—that between the Donatists and the Catholics; and the source of the most terribly logical schemes of Christian doctrine—the predestinarian system of Augustine. Tertullian is the first great character in African Christianity, which had an abiding influence on its development.

He has been identified with a lawyer quoted as an authority of that name, and he had unmistakably received a legal training. Indeed, he is often unintelligible to readers unacquainted with the terminology of the Roman law. In his *Apology for Christianity* he rarely stands on the defensive, but boldly attacks his opponents. When they make the usual charges against the

believers, Tertullian not only denies them, but plainly says the heathen are guilty of all and more than all of which they accuse the Christians. With true legal instinct he sees the unreasonableness of applying a different procedure to Christians, if they are criminals, to that adopted towards all other lawbreakers. He shows that Trajan is absolutely inconsistent in his advice to Pliny, not to seek out the Christians and yet to punish them. Either they were guilty, and ought to be arrested, or, if not sought out, they should be treated as innocent. Such a judgment, which necessity had made confused, was unworthy of a lawyer. Tertullian, being both a jurist and an enthusiast, had a strong dislike of compromise. He shows how absurd it is for people to think that Christians were necessarily foes to the Roman Empire. They pray daily for the emperor. How could they do otherwise, when they believe that if Rome perished, the world would come to an end? The whole *Apology* is a brilliant piece of invective—full of phrases which have become immortal. "If the Tiber is in flood; if there is no flood of the Nile . . . forthwith there is a cry, 'The Christians to the lion!' So many to one lion!" "The blood of the martyrs is their seed." "The testimony of the soul of man is by nature Christian." Tertullian, as a phrase-maker, is only equalled by his countryman St. Augustine. He has, however, no patience with philosophy. "What have the porch and the Church in common?" he remarks.

Celsus

Fortunately, there have survived parts of a great attack on the Christian religion made, probably as early as the last quarter of the second century, by a philosopher who already judged it to be of sufficient importance to be exposed in a long and elaborate treatise. A certain Celsus, otherwise unknown, composed in the time of the Anto-

nines a book called *A True Account* (*Logos Alethes*). It was evidently the work of one who had studied Christianity widely, if not profoundly. In some places his attack is acute, and he has a keen eye for weak spots. Celsus begins by cleverly assuming the rôle of a Jew who objects to the new doctrines as a perversion of his ancient religion. Suddenly he drops the part, and argues as a heathen philosopher. He denies that there is anything original in the best part of Christianity—it is shamelessly borrowed from antiquity; the assertion that Jesus was God is scouted—other sages did more wonders and never made such a claim. The Christian doctrine of the Resurrection moves Celsus to ridicule; and so does the idea that man is all important in God's sight. The ants might meet and debate on their position in the scale of creation with equal propriety. Christianity is an appeal to the basest of men. The Mysteries invite the pure in heart, but the Christians ask the wicked to join their circle. And so Celsus goes on, using every weapon at his command to discredit the hated sect. But at the end, he lets us into the secret that he is convinced of the danger that the new religion is withdrawing the best men from public life. If Celsus writes in the days of Marcus Aurelius, there was indeed occasion for all good men to rally to save the state, and to assist the emperor in his noble efforts to do so. So Celsus turns to the Christians, and begs them to help the emperor in his council, and even to share in his military enterprises (to help him to command the army).

Origen's reply

More than fifty years perhaps after its publication, the *True Account* fell into the hands of Ambrosius, a wealthy man, who used his money to give Origen's labours to the world. Ambrosius asked Origen to read and answer the

book; and he undertook the task with the intention of replying in a pamphlet. When, however, he realised its importance, Origen devoted his best efforts to refute the arguments of Celsus, and produced a great apology in eight books. One of its chief merits in our eyes is that Celsus is quoted at length and answered, so that we are not left in the dark as to what the apologist is trying to refute, but have both sides before us.

Origen is the greatest of the early apologists; and he meets some of the difficulties we ourselves feel in regard to our faith. He recognises that Celsus has found certain weak spots; and although his criticisms are at times superficial, they are often real. For example, some of the objections raised against popular Christianity are valid, others are misrepresentations, because Celsus has confounded orthodox beliefs with those of Ophite Gnostics.

The Christians an intellectual force

Origen's object in dealing with these is to present the highest conception of his religion, as held by those thoroughly instructed in its doctrines, and devoted—for he never separates theory from practice—to carry out its principles. Enough has been said to show that the Christians of the first two and a half centuries were quite capable of holding their own with the best educated men of their time. The Gospel was at first accepted chiefly by those who were, as Paul says, "not wise after the flesh"; though this was never applicable to the whole body of believers, which at that very time included a Paul, a Luke, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Church within a century of Paul's career had begun to draw into its fold men whom, as Celsus recognised, the Empire could ill spare, and had produced in Tertullian and Origen writers who were fully a match for the best lawyers and philosophers of their time.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PRIMITIVE BISHOP

Bishops not originally diocesan

There has been so much discussion as to the apostolical succession of bishops; as to the necessity of the order in the Church; as to the independence of each individual bishop; as to the way in which the authority of the episcopate was originally transmitted; as to whether the churches had at first democratic or monarchical constitutions; and as to the rights of bishops over their clergy, that the really interesting subject of what a primitive bishop actually did has been disposed to be neglected. Before, therefore, attempting to describe the functions of a primitive bishop, it may be well to issue a somewhat startling reminder that for many centuries the majority of Christians have done without a bishop, and perhaps have hardly set eyes on one in their lives. Take any map of the dioceses of most Christian countries and it will be plain that, as long as the means of communication fell in any way short of those we enjoy today, it must have been so. A single example will suffice. In England the medieval diocese of Lincoln extended from the Humber to the Thames. It included the counties of Lincoln, Nottingham, Northampton, Leicester, Oxford, and Buckingham; and it was quite possible that the bishop was occupied a great part of his time with his duties as a peer of the realm in London, or as a prelate in Rome. He, or his deputy, ordained all the clergy, and confirmed as many of the laity as possible. His officials adminis-

tered the diocese, but only the most prominent of his priests and his cathedral clergy could ever come into intimate contact with him. Even now a modern bishop has to do mainly with his clergy, and the average layman only sees him on formal occasions.

Bishops necessary to their people

It was otherwise in the ancient Church. Except in Egypt, where the bishop of Alexandria with his twelve presbyters exercised jurisdiction over the whole country, the bishop was indispensable to all his flock. The bishop was, in fact, as necessary to all his people as is the rector of a modern parish. Little or nothing could be done without him. Ignatius says that no Eucharist should be celebrated apart from him. According to the *Church Orders*, which in their present form are late, the Pope consecrated the Eucharist and sent the Elements to the city churches for distribution. At every baptism he was supposed to preside; and the great Easter ceremony took place at his own Church of the Lateran. These were survivals of the time when the bishop presided in person at every great function, perhaps even at every Eucharist. It may be that when Polycarp visited Rome, and Anicetus the bishop entrusted the mysteries to him, that he did the future martyr the honour of permitting him to act as the bishop of Rome. Anyhow the rule seems, except in Egypt, to have been no church without a bishop.

Rise of monarchical episcopacy

The question how monarchical episcopacy arose has been hotly debated. If the earliest Churches were synagogues, they were governed by boards of elders. These seem to have been known indifferently as bishops (*episcopoi*) or presbyters (*presbuteroi*). It has been maintained that monarchical episcopacy arose in Asia, at the

instigation of the Apostle St. John. All we know, however, for certain, is that at an early date each church was represented by a single bishop as its ruler. It may be conjectured that the tendency of the Christians to recognise a single leader in each church was natural, and may account for its universality. The communities were probably small, and it was of supreme importance that unity should be maintained in both doctrine and discipline.

Disputes at Corinth. I Clement

Of this the primitive church of Corinth is an example. It was certainly not episcopal, in our sense of the word, in the days of Paul; it was probably not at the end of the first century, when the first Epistle of Clement was dispatched to it. But one thing is evident from *I Corinthians* and *I Clement*: the Corinthian church was as factious as any Greek republic of antiquity. When Paul wrote, the ministry appears to have been charismatic—men with spiritual gifts guided the Church; fifty years or so later, there were official bishops and deacons; but in both instances the Corinthians were rent by intestine discords. From the *Epistle* of Clement, in the name of the Roman community, it appears that the younger members of the Church had become weary of the rule of the older set who filled the chief offices, and that a sort of revolution in favour of the juniors had taken place, and a new government had been established. This the Roman Christians regarded as a manifestation of un-Christian jealousy. Jealousy, they point out, had ruined states in the past, and would prove the ruin of the Corinthian Church, which is exhorted to restore its old rulers. An argument from Scripture is advanced in support of this advice. A church is an Israel, and it was the desire of its apostolic founders that it should consist of Priests, Levites, and People (the laity *i.e., laos,* or people of God). To disturb this

order was to oppose Scripture, which had promised to give Israel "bishops" and "deacons" in righteousness, and who consequently were of divine appointment.

One bishop necessary in the interest of order

A natural remedy for such disorder was that each church should recognise one of its members as its chief, and that his decision should be acknowledged by all, and loyally supported by the other officers of the church. Hence the monarchical episcopate, which soon became generally established, and the bishop became literally the shepherd of his flock, a common father to all over whom he presided. In later times, the councils of the Church were directed by the bishops, as heads of the different Christian families; and like the Roman Senators, these were known as "the fathers" (*patres*).

Functions of the bishop

The primitive bishop was looked up to as not only the leader in worship, but as the judge, the dispenser of charity, the representative of the world, heathen as well as Christian, and the ruler and defender of his people. To the outside world he probably appeared as the trustee of the property of his church, vested in some legal form or other. He was appealed to in all difficulties arising among his flock; he pronounced sentence against, and absolved, offenders; he saw to the reception of strangers, the relief of the afflicted, and all the multifarious acts of charity undertaken by the Church. When persecution raged he was generally the first to be sought out, and often was the first victim. So important a figure did he appear to the heathen, that, when Decius tried to destroy the Church, he said he would rather see a rival to the Empire than a new bishop of Rome.

Appointment of bishops

Great obscurity hangs over many things in early Christianity which we would gladly know; among others, how a bishop was appointed. He had certainly to be approved by the flock over whom he was called to preside —as a rule the officials had to be formally accepted by the people—but whether he was elected by the members of his church, or nominated by the neighbouring bishops or others, is uncertain. The methods of choosing a bishop varied in different places. We do not even know by what rite he was ordained to his office. It is certain, however, that the bishop was regarded as representing the church which had either elected him, or accepted him of its own free will.

The bishop and the presbyters

Another very obscure point is the relation of the bishop to his presbyters. In the *Apostolic Constitutions,* as in the *Pastoral Epistles,* the presbyters are mentioned, but the chief duty seems to fall to the deacons. It is true that Timothy is exhorted to give the elders who minister in the "word and doctrine" "double honour," but the responsibility of instruction fell on the bishop. Even in very late times it is the bishops, not the priests, who are blamed for being "unpreaching." Irenæus, as has been observed, dwells on the apostolic succession of doctrine in the great churches. In many churches it appears doubtful whether the presbyter was really analogous to the modern priest, that is as one who may do all a bishop's work except ordain and perform a few distinctly episcopal functions. In a small community the bishop sufficed for these, and the presbyters acted as his council. When, however, in the middle of the third century, Pope Fabian was martyred, and no successor could be appointed, the

presbyters of Rome took over the government of the church, and acted collectively as representing the bishop.

Deacons

The special assistants of the bishop were the deacons, who were supposed to stand in a sort of filial relation to him. Indeed, the *Apostolic Constitutions* compare the bishop to the Father, and the deacon to the Son, who can do nothing "except he sees the Father do it."

Here the deaconess is introduced to make up the Trinity, and is likened to the Holy Spirit. Access to the bishop for men is by the deacon, and for women by the deaconess through the deacon. The *Constitutions* are not primitive, but the crudity of this idea may be. The deacons, especially their chief, were a great power in every church, and one of them usually succeeded the bishop; as financial officers they had more influence than the priests with most of the congregation.

Callistus of Rome

The careers of two bishops in the third century will serve to illustrate what has been said above. They are so dissimilar that they admirably illustrate different aspects of their office. Yet if St. Cyprian of Carthage had, like St. Callistus of Rome, left none of his letters behind him, and had been described by St. Hippolytus,—for all are accredited as saints—he might not have fared any better in the eyes of posterity. The discovery of parts of the *Refutation of the Heresies* or *Philosophumena,* which is now considered the work of Hippolytus, a rival of Callistus for the chair of Peter, reveals a most scandalous story of the early career of Callistus, who began as a slave and a convict, and, after gaining spurious credit as a confessor of Christ, became the confidant of Pope Zephyrinus and his successor. It seems also that

Callistus incurred not only the displeasure of Hippolytus, but also of Tertullian, and was the *bête noire* of the austere party in the Church. But it is not the character, but the episcopate of Callistus with which we are concerned.

His rule as bishop

Reading between the lines of the denunciation of Tertullian, and the bitter invective of Hippolytus, it is evident that Callistus was a very able man, and that his long pontificate, and still longer career of influence in the Roman church, has left a permanent mark on the history of the episcopate. The old days of rigid discipline, perhaps of Greek Christianity in Rome, were passing away, and a new age demanded innovations in discipline which Callistus was not afraid to undertake. Tertullian's language shows that the innovating pope was a strong man, the Pontifex Maximus—notice that Tertullian gives him a heathen title, particularly reserved for the emperor himself—has issued an edict, and that a *peremptory* one, "I remit the sin of fornication, etc." From the use of the word *edictum,* Tertullian is evidently regarding Callistus as a Roman prætor, who at the beginning of his tenure of office announced how he intended to administer the law. He had decided to show what to Tertullian appeared to be almost criminal leniency to carnal offenders, by allowing them to return to the Church after submitting to penance, following Hermas, whom Tertullian had denounced as the *pastor moechorum.* What is interesting to us is the legislative power exercised by a bishop, apparently on his own initiative. Hippolytus confirms this when he says that Callistus recognised the marriage of free-born women to slaves, and also refused to degrade clergy who had fallen on the principle "once a priest always a priest." It has been suggested that there were two parties in the church of Rome—the old Greek-

speaking church, represented by the highly cultured Hippolytus, which adhered to the severe purity of antiquity and retained the aristocratic prejudices against men of servile origin, and the newer Christian community, who spoke Latin and had more sympathy with the lower orders. If the early scandals about Callistus are even partially true his later life seems to have been above reproach; for Hippolytus only attacks the policy and theology, not the morality of the pope. It is certainly to his credit, if he had been a grievous sinner, that he showed leniency to the fallen, and, if he had been a slave, that he took the side of the servile class in the Church. He was certainly a man of education, and may be classed among those popes, and there were several in later days, who were great lawyers as well as ecclesiastics.

Cyprian

Very different was the highly-born Cyprian, who as almost a neophyte was made bishop of Carthage. To many he is chiefly interesting for his theory of the episcopal office; but here we are concerned rather with his practical difficulties than his views. With Protestants he is an unpopular saint, because he represents hierarchical pretensions; but when his difficulties are considered, he must have the sympathy of all good men.

The Decian persecution

The persecution of Decius was the supreme crisis in the history of the Church; and if not so severe it was even more dangerous than the so-called Diocletian persecution. The Roman world, tired of being ruled by Syrians, Goths, and Arabs, had at last a true Roman who claimed kinship with the family of Trajan. Decius was an admirer of the ancient religion and morality of the Republic. He sought to purify society by reviving the ancient office of Censor, to which he appointed Valerian,

a man like-minded with himself. For years before his accession, the Church had enjoyed comparative freedom, and Origen could write, "Few and quite easily counted are those who have died for the Christian faith."

All ordered to sacrifice

To be a Christian was at this time no dangerous adventure, but the acceptance of membership of a society, which offered a pure worship and not a little worldly advantage. And Decius did not forbid people to continue members. He simply ordered everybody to perform an act of sacrifice, and to obtain a certificate that they had done so; with this *libellus,* as it was called, a man was safe. All people were asked to perform was an act of loyalty to the Empire: something apparently as harmless as saluting the flag. When the order was issued everybody complied readily, and even some Christians considered they were doing no harm in obeying.

The "Lapsed"

A few, however, were more scrupulous, and suffered torture and martyrdom. These were regarded as heroes by the faithful, and were extravagantly honoured; while the weaker brethren discovered that they were apostates, and forever excluded from the Church. Others, less guilty, had purchased *libelli* without committing any specific act of apostasy. By church law, no apostate could be readmitted to communion, but at this time many repented, and showed their contrition by acts of real service to the suffering Christians. The confessors who were awaiting martyrdom pleaded for leniency, and were too honoured to be neglected. Gradually, however, the whole affair became a scandal. Confessors in prison even issued blank certificates, and the church doors were beset by crowds with orders for readmission, though they had not given proof of genuine penitence.

Factions against Cyprian

This was the situation with which the bishops had to deal. In Cyprian we have an example of how a great man acted in the emergency. He withdrew from Carthage till the persecution had abated, because, with real courage, he recognised that he was more needed in those dangerous times as a pilot of the Church than as a martyr. What followed is a sad example of the faction and intrigue which a Christian bishop might encounter. Five presbyters, headed by Novatus, jealous of Cyprian's promotion as a neophyte, formed a cabal against him. One of the deacons named Felicissimus, from a district called the *Mons,* in Carthage, made Cyprian's action towards the confessors the occasion of a schism. The Roman presbyters, who administered the Church after the martyrdom of Fabian, wrote a letter full of insinuations that Cyprian had been unfaithful in withdrawing from Carthage to avoid martyrdom, couched in such illiterate Latin that Cyprian politely doubted its genuineness. It is impossible not to admire the statesman-like conduct of the bishop at this juncture. Though he held the highest view of the authority vested in his office, as given from above, he acted with the assent and coöperation of his fellow bishops, and took his people fully into his confidence. He paid due respect to the confessors and martyrs; but not at the cost of discipline, granting readmission to the Church if properly demanded, but at the price of penance duly performed. His dealings with the outside world show how wide were the interests of the bishop of a great city. In his controversy with Stephen of Rome about rebaptism, he finds his chief ally in Firmilian of Cappadocia.

True significance of Cyprian's career

Cyprian's career is far more attractive when studied in view of the circumstances of his life, than in the light of

his arguments in support of any theory of Church government. It is a great mistake to pronounce him an ecclesiastic, bent on asserting the importance of his order, and supporting his views by false scriptural analogies. He was striving not to furnish future supporters of episcopal authority with arguments, but to prevent the disorder and disintegration of the Church. In a persecution so insidious as that of Decius, the Christians had to keep in unity or perish; and Cyprian is not to be accused of narrowness or hierarchical pride, because he saw the chief hope of unity to be in a well-ordered episcopate. Judged by the light of his time he was a truly great man.

CHAPTER XVII

EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The earliest Christians used the synagogue service

As long as the Christians were still members of the Jewish community their worship must have been that of the synagogue. Of this we know little except from the New Testament; but Jewish scholars assert that the *Amidah* prayer probably antedates the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. All that we can say precisely of the service of the synagogue in the days of Christ is that it was non-sacrificial and non-priestly, and that it consisted of reading of scripture and addresses. Whether the ritual resembled that of the modern synagogue we do not know; all we can be sure of is that its object was the same as that of many Protestant services today, namely instruction. The synagogue service took place every Sabbath, and was attended not only by Jews but by Gentiles as well. Prayer naturally formed part of all synagogue worship, and there can be little doubt that the Psalms were extensively used. The Jewish Christian had nothing to learn in this respect, or for that matter to change, when he accepted the Faith.

Gentile converts

It was otherwise with the Gentile converts, who naturally had to acquire a new language of devotion, although some of the prayers which have survived from the Mysteries have, *mutatis nominibus,* almost a Christian sound. But, by the appearance of Christianity, many people were

well acquainted with Judaism, and especially with its formularies, which were believed to be of magical efficacy.

What lies before us is to see how it came to pass that a distinctly Christian worship was evolved amid the Jewish and Gentile elements of which the Church was composed. The prayerfulness of Jesus, and his exhortation to His disciples to pray, is notable in the Synoptic Gospels. Two of His prayers are the Lord's Prayer and the prayer after the Supper, before He and His disciples went forth to the mount of Olives (Joh. xvii).

Earliest Christian services and places of prayer

The Christians from the first observed the Jewish hours of prayer, both at Jerusalem and in private houses. They had their meeting in the upper chamber at Jerusalem and at the house of Mary, the mother of Mark. Outside Jerusalem they had evidently meetings of their own for purposes of worship; and to the last they attended the Temple whenever it was possible. In *Acts* we have a description of a service at Troas. It was held on the first day of the week and at night. There were many lights in the upper chamber, where the brethren were assembled. Paul discoursed at great length, until dawn, then he "broke bread," and having partaken, went forth. From this we may infer that a primitive Christian service was nocturnal, consisted of exhortation and instruction, and culminated in a Eucharistic meal.

Disorders in Corinth

In Corinth, as we learn from the Epistles, the meal tended to be unseemly, and the services to be characterised by disorderly exhibitions of spiritual gifts, especially by that of "tongues."

Christian Prayers and hymns

In the Pastoral Epistles, prayers carefully classified under different names (I Tim. ii, 1-2), are commanded to

be made for rulers and the peace of the world. But an important feature in New Testament worship were the Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, extracts from which are probably preserved in the Pauline Epistles. It may be that the worship in heaven and the songs of the angels in the Apocalypse are specimens of a very early Christian hymnology. Christian prayers tended towards a set form as is seen in the Eucharistic prayer preserved in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,* to be used by all except the prophets, who are permitted to give thanks as they please. At the end of the first *Epistle* of Clement there is a prayer which is decidedly liturgical, and follows the injunction to pray for rulers given in Timothy. But there is a disappointing lack of definite information as to Christian services or form of prayer till a comparatively late date; and no really early service books are preserved. We have to wait for centuries before we can find a Latin Missal or Breviary. Nevertheless, the form, at any rate of the Eucharistic service, was destined early to take a definite outline.

Justin Martyr describes Christian worship

At the end of his first *Apology,* Justin Martyr describes the Christian rites in language which a heathen could understand. First, Baptism in the Threefold Name, whereby the convert is transformed by his new birth from a child of necessity and ignorance into one with free will and knowledge. Notice here how the convert escapes the domination of fate, under which the heathen were oppressed.

After Baptism the candidate is admitted to the Eucharist and into full communion with the brethren, whose president, after the prayers, offers the bread and wine mixed with water, together with a solemn invocation to the Father, through the name of the Son and Holy Ghost.

At the conclusion of which the people say Amen. The deacons then distribute the two elements to the people and carry a portion to the absent. Justin then explains that the bread and wine over which the prayer of thanksgiving has been said are not common, but have become the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. He next says that this service was performed every Sunday. People assemble from all places in town and country; the "memoirs" of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, were read; the president exhorted the congregation to follow what they have heard; then came the Eucharistic feast, all rising together and praying. Justin had before explained that none but baptised persons might partake, and only if they are still living as Christ commanded.

Here we have every essential feature of the Christian Eucharist in every Liturgy namely, (1) instruction by the reading of the works of the apostles or prophets, (2) exhortation, (3) a great and solemn dedication of the Eucharistic elements. This is common to all offices, from the earliest known to the last revision of the Book of Common Prayer. It is noticeable that the conduct of the worship is entrusted to a "president," but who he was Justin does not specify.

Worship in the Apostolic Constitutions

The Eucharist was the centre of Christian worship, the pivot round which all revolved; but we are greatly in the dark as to the exact ritual or prayers till we reach the fourth century and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. These may describe more primitive practices, though the church, as contemplated, must have been a more considerable building than any very early one could possibly have been.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* are a compilation of

Christian precepts, attributed to the apostles, who here and there speak in their own name. They contain passages from the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,* the Epistle of Barnabas, and, of course, the Pastoral Epistles of the New Testament. Their original home is as much a matter of dispute as is their date; but, as they stand, they are almost certainly oriental. Behind them, besides the ancient documents enumerated, there is an old Roman *Church Order,* and the *Canons of Hippolytus* so called. The *Church Orders* are in different languages, and it is difficult to decide what are the really primitive parts; but it certainly would appear that the importance of the deacon's connection with the bishop, and a certain vagueness as to the place of the presbyter in church economy is ancient, whilst the rules of penance and the elaboration of ceremonial are of late date. One can best judge from the description of a church service.

A church service

The church is to be long, with its head towards the east, having vestries on each side. It is to be like a ship, of which the bishop is the commander. The bishop's throne is to be placed in the middle, and the presbyters are to sit around him, the deacons are to stand in close-fitting garments; for they are the navigators. The laity are to be placed, the men and women apart. The old may sit, the young of both sexes are to stand. The virgins and widows are to have specially honourable positions. Doorkeepers are to look after the men, a deaconess after the women. The deacon is to see that the congregation keeps awake and behaves properly. First, the reader is to read the books of Moses and the Old Testament. Then the Psalms of David are to be sung, and the people are to join at the conclusion of the verses. After this the Acts and "the Epistles of Paul, our fellow worker"—the apostles are

supposed to be speaking—are read; and then a priest or deacon is to read the Gospels, which "We, Matthew and John, have delivered to you, and those by Mark and Luke, the fellow workers of Paul." After the Gospel, the presbyters are to address the people in turn, and the bishop, as the commander, is to speak last. The catechumens and penitents leave the church at the end of the sermons; all are to turn standing towards the east. The kiss of peace is then to be given, and the sacrifice to be offered.

The great Eucharistic prayer

Peculiar interest is attached to the prayer of Consecration, which is the origin of the Canon of the Mass and the corresponding prayer in every liturgy. It is given in the form of an injunction by James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee. The deacon, now that the catechumens and non-communicants have departed, is to call on the congregation to put away all malice against one another, and to stand upright before the Lord, and in fear and trembling to offer the sacrifice. Two deacons are to stand before the altar with fans of peacock feathers to keep off the flies. The gifts are to be presented, and the bishop, with the priests on each side, is to stand before the altar.

The bishop is now called "the High Priest." He says, "The Grace of Almighty God, and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." The people reply, "And with thy spirit." The High Priest says,—"Lift up your hearts." The people,—"We lift them up unto the Lord." The High Priest, —"Let us give thanks unto the Lord." The people,—"It is meet and right so to do," etc. The prayer is a very long one, and has been greatly abbreviated in the Roman Canon; but it contains no mention of saints.

The Words of Consecration are as follows: "For in the

same night that He was betrayed, He took bread in His holy and undefiled hands, and, looking up to Thee, His God and Father, He break it and gave it to His disciples saying, 'This is the mystery of the New Covenant: take of it and eat. This is my body, which is broken for many for the remission of sins!' In like manner also He took the cup, and mixed it with wine and water, and sanctified it, and delivered it to them saying, 'Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins—do this in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth my death till I come.' "

Eucharistic services had some invariable characteristics

Of course these *Constitutions* cannot be said to represent primitive worship; yet there is good reason to believe that the Eucharistic service took its main outlines at a very early time, and that the churches in different places, though they elaborated the ceremonies, did not depart from those essential features which are indicated by Justin. Special provision is made that the worship shall be private, in days when persecution made it impossible for the Christians to meet; but in the third century, before the Peace of the Church, the Christians had in some cities conspicuous buildings for their worship. As has been already indicated, the object of most persecutions was not to prevent the Christian from using any form of worship they pleased, but to force them to recognise the official religion by acts which they considered it would be apostasy to perform. Even by the close of the second century, according to the testimony of Tertullian and the evidence of the Catacombs, the Christians were already numerous, and in times of peace the congregations may have been as large as the *Constitutions* suggest.

Religious exercises

But the religious practices of the early Church were by no means confined to attendance at mass on Sunday. As far as was possible the devout spent their lives in worship. From a very early time, Wednesday and Friday were observed as fasts; the Christian Passover was celebrated from the first; and, despite Paul's rebuke to the Galatians for observing days and months, sacred seasons were kept.

The Sabbath and Sunday

Many regarded the Sabbath, as well as Sunday, as sacred. The *Apostolic Constitutions* order Christmas (25th of the ninth month), and Epiphany (6th of tenth month—the year began in March), and the fast of Lent to be kept. Later on, Peter and Paul are represented as making a law that slaves are not to work on the Sabbath or Sunday, in Holy Week, or Ascension Day, Pentecost, Nativity, Epiphany, and the feasts of Apostles and Stephen the proto-martyr. The hours of prayer kept were the Third, Sixth, Ninth, Evening, and Cockcrowing.

Additional acts of devotion

In his treatise, *To a Wife*, Tertullian indicates why it was almost impossible for a Christian woman to practice her religion, if she had married a heathen husband. In the first place, she had constantly to absent herself from him at night. For the solemnities of Easter she has to be away all night. She will be wanting to observe a special day of devotion when her husband wants to take her for diversion to the baths, to fast when he has a dinner party. She must attract notice by her frequent use of the sign of the cross, by rising constantly from her bed to pray, by visiting the cottages of the poorer brethren, by creeping to prison to kiss the chains of a martyr. The honour of

the champions of the faith was becoming excessive in the second centuries, and already the day on which they suffered, their "Nativity" as it was beautifully styled, was being solemnly observed.

Military terms

The military aspect of Christianity is emphasised in the *statio,* or "mounting guard," days of fasting or prayer observed voluntarily by Christians. The *statio,* says Tertullian, takes its name from its military counterpart, "for we are the military of God" (*militia dei*).

It is not very clear how far the Christians observed Sunday as a day of abstinence from work. To slaves of heathen, and those engaged in many businesses, this must have been impossible; and the distinguishing features of Sunday observance were the obligation to attend the weekly Eucharist, and never to fast on that day on account of its joyous reminder of the Resurrection.

Preaching

Of preaching, which later became so important in the Church, especially in the East, we have little record. The so-called homilies, Origen's for example, are rather lectures than sermons. We have, however, a very ancient specimen of a sermon, probably belonging to the second century, in the so-called *"second letter"* of Clement of Rome, which, as the comparatively recent recovery of the last part shows, proves really to be a homily. The words "And let us not merely seem to believe and pay attention now, while we are being exhorted by the Elders," is a curious confirmation of the direction in the *Constitutions* that after the Gospel the presbyters should exhort, the bishop speaking last. *II Clement* is interesting when read in this light, and bears a certain resemblance to the catholic Epistle of James.

CHAPTER XVIII

SCHISMS

Heresy and Schism

The chief fault of the Christians, if we may judge by the Epistles in the New Testament, was a tendency towards splitting into factions. This is often called heresy (*hæresis*); but in later days "heresy" meant error in opinion, and "schism" division, generally on some practical ground, discipline, authority, and the like. A Gnostic or an Arian was a heretic, because, though he professed to give the true meaning of the Faith, he held opinions at variance with the Christian tradition. A Novatian or a Donatist was a schismatic, because he broke off from the Church on a question of discipline. As a general rule a heretic, like Marcion, is ejected from the Church, and a schismatic secedes from it. By a curious irony the two greatest schismatics of the West, Tertullian and Novatian, were acknowledged to be pillars of orthodoxy so far as their theology was concerned. On Tertullian's account, and for other reasons as well, we may classify the Montanists as schismatics, rather than heretics, though they did not desire to break away. As a rule schisms flourished most in the West, and heresies in the East. Even Montanism, which arose in Asia Minor, and was there perhaps decidedly heretical, became schismatical when transplanted to Rome and Africa. The cause is to be found in the inherent difference between eastern and western habit of mind. In the East it is speculative, in the West practical. The oriental regarded Christianity as a revelation of

truth, and was persistently engaged in explaining its dogmas. The western Christian was more disposed to look on the Church as an institution, and to enquire what were the conditions of membership, and under what laws Christians were to be subjected. The East put the question, "What is truth?" The West, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Paschal Controversy

The earliest known schism, if we except that of Corinth in the days of Clement, was threatened by the Paschal controversy. All Christians agreed to keep the Passover (Easter), but there were two equally weighty apostolic traditions in favour of observing it on the 14th day, or always on a Sunday. The Christians of the Province of Asia followed the Johannine tradition of keeping the 14th day, and those of Rome and the rest of the Christian world kept to that of Peter. Victor, as bishop of Rome, tried to force Polycrates of Ephesus to induce the Asian bishops to abandon their practice, and threatened to excommunicate them when they refused. But Irenæus wrote, in the name of the bishops of Gaul, so strong a letter of remonstrance, that Victor desisted, and what might have been a serious breach in Christian unity was averted.

Montanism

But at this time a more serious difficulty was arising in the form of a religious revival, started by obscure persons but destined to win important adherents. A certain Montanus, born in an obscure village called Ardabau on the borders of Mysia and Phrygia, became possessed by a spirit of prȍphecy, and appears to have traversed the country in company with two women, Maximilla and Priscilla, who had deserted their husbands. Their preten-

sion caused much difficulty to the local bishops; for their zeal was undoubted, and their orthodoxy, save for their claim to inspiration, beyond suspicion. The bishops, after careful examination, declared that their prophesyings were instigated by the devil, whom they tried unsuccessfully to drive out. Councils were held to condemn Montanism, but the movement spread. So obscure, however, were Montanus and his prophetesses that their very fate was uncertain. It was reported that they had all committed suicide. Eusebius gives the testimony of the adversaries of the movement, most of which appear to be simply abusive. One thing, however, was certain and disquieting, the Montanists were distinguished among the martyrs. All the Church could say to this was that such martyrdoms profited nothing. The Montanists organised their community and their teachers; and to the horror of the orthodox, accepted salaries.

Victor and the Montanists

Some of Montanus' followers now made their appearance at Rome, and, if we may believe Eusebius, the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne warned Pope Eleutherus against them. But in the days of Victor the Roman church became the centre of controversy. The disputes about the Trinity, as well as the Easter question, were agitating the community; and, at the same time, some followers of Montanus appeared in Rome. They were evidently received by the bishop (Victor is not named) with approval; and it is probable that they had modified their practices considerably when they left their native country, and appeared to be spiritually gifted and specially earnest Christians. It is possible that Victor was not in very close communication with the Asian episcopate owing to the difficulties in regard to the Paschal observance; at any rate, it was not till a fellow countryman of theirs,

named Praxeas, told the pope about the Montanists that they were excluded from the Roman church.

Tertullian

The sect found a convert in Tertullian, to whose fiery and eminently legal temperament their tenets were extremely acceptable; and it is on his account that Montanism is of interest. Tertullian's zeal and genuine devotion, in addition to his orthodoxy in doctrine, his hatred of Gnosticism, his unrivalled power of invective against heathen and heretic, his erudition in things sacred and profane, made him an ally with which the catholics could not dispense. The great champion of the Church, Cyprian, called him "The Master"; his defense of the doctrine of the Trinity became the touchstone of western orthodox belief; and all the Church could do was to refuse him the title of Saint.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that henceforward, Montanism was not the somewhat corybantic excesses of Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla, but Tertullian in his own person, who is our real authority for the opinions of the party to which he attached himself. These are briefly as follows:

Montanist tenets

(1) The dispensation of Christ had been made perfect by that of the Spirit, as revealed by Montanus. Christianity was enriched by the manifestation of the spiritual gifts in Montanus, his friends, and his followers. Visions, ecstasies, prophetic utterances, were evidences of the new power in the Church.

(2) The old order of ecclesiastical government remained, but the clergy had to yield to the spiritually gifted men and women who, as prophets, were the true guides of the Church.

(3) The doctrine of inspiration was not so much that of an indwelling spirit transforming men, but of a mighty power employing human agency to declare itself. It was the old idea that when the prophet spoke, as such, the Spirit of God, and not the man, was speaking. When he said "Thus saith the Lord" he was possessed by a power which spoke through him. The spirit was the bow which played the air; the inspired man was but the lyre, a passive instrument.

(4) The Church must go back to primitive severity. The Christianity of the day had become a compromise with the world. Second marriage, readmission of grievous sinners to communion, could not be any more tolerated. The laws of God must be literally observed.

(5) The Christian body consisted of "spiritual" and "physical" members, and by the former only could spiritual things be discerned.

Tertullian's Montanism was not unlike more modern Puritanism, with the ideal of a perfect Church at ceaseless war with the world.

Perpetua and her companions

It has even been supposed that Tertullian was the author of the *Acts of Martyrdom* of the Africans, Perpetua, Felicitas, and their companions, which are the most beautiful record of suffering in the early Church. Their visions, the implied rebuke of their bishop, the fact that there is no mention of the husbands of the two heroines, and the style employed, are all arguments in favour of this supposition, which, if correct, show how these enthusiasts may have been inconvenient, but could not be utterly disregarded by the catholics. At any rate, the results of Montanism were more permanent than the sect in the West. Probably the Church became more hierarchical, prophecy fell into some disrepute, and the written

Scriptures tended to be more regarded as the norm of faith. Certainly the movement discredited Millennarian hopes in the early Church. But as the course of history shows, the spirit of Montanism never dies.

Hippolytus and Callistus

The second schism of importance would have been unknown to us but for the discovery of some lost books of the *Philosophumena,* and their assignment to Hippolytus of Partus. It has been alluded to before, but may now be related in more detail. Callistus, even when the slave of Carpophorus in the days of Commodus (A.D. 180-192), was evidently a man of some mark. Though a slave, he had been able to start a bank, and to induce the pious to subscribe liberally to the enterprise. When he failed, he is represented as making desperate efforts to conceal his guilt by obtaining, by illegitimate violence, the martyr's crown. Condemned to work in the mines of Sardinia (Hippolytus says as a felon), he received his pardon as a Christian confessor, and came back to be highly honoured by Pope Zephyrinus, who set him over the great cemetery which afterwards was known as the Catacomb of St. Callistus. He was the adviser of Zephyrinus during his pontificate of seventeen years, and succeeded him as pope. At least so say the papal records. But Hippolytus tells a different story. Callistus founded a sect, called after him, and became their bishop. He had the presumption to call this "the Catholic Church," the true Church being that over which Hippolytus presided. Hippolytus has, however reluctantly, to admit that Callistus had the majority on his side, which he attributes to the lax morality allowed by his rival. The little church of irreconcilables led by Hippolytus, soon disappeared; but the story, as he tells it, shows that the old struggle between antique severity and a more lenient treatment of offenders was the cause of

this schism, and that Hippolytus was one of those sterner Christians of whom Tertullian would have approved.

Novatianism

The dissatisfaction at the growing laxity of the Church's rulers slumbered for a while, only to break out again after the persecution of Decius, when the Church began to allow apostates to return to the fold at the request of the confessors. It was, in truth, a very strange time for the first conspicuously contested papal election. Fabian had been martyred by Decius in January 250, and for eighteen months the Roman church had not dared to elect a bishop. At last, Cornelius reluctantly accepted the dangerous position, and a rival appeared in Novatian or Novatus, for he is called by both names. The story is obscure, and the only authority is a letter from Cornelius to Cyprian. According to Cornelius, Novatian had only received baptism on his sick bed, which was considered as in itself a disqualification for office; that he was a presbyter of the Roman church who had withdrawn from active work during persecution, and had refused to emerge from his retirement to assist his suffering brethren on the plea that "he was attached to another philosophy"—probably ascetic practice; that he sent for bishops from southern Italy, and procured ignorant men to consecrate him. Whether these charges are true is open to doubt. Dionysius of Alexandria wrote a brotherly letter begging Novatian to retire in the interests of the peace of the Church. But, whatever his motives were, Novatian was a remarkable man, a prolific writer, and, as the spread of his schism evinces, of great influence. He had the sympathy of at least one of the patriarchal bishops, in Fabius of Antioch. By the Council of Nicæa, Novatianism seems to have been widespread, and one of its bishops was specially invited by Constantine to be present. The or-

thodoxy of the sect was beyond question, and its testimony was highly valued for its independence of catholic influence by the supporters of the Nicene Creed. The *bon mot* of the Emperor Constantine—"Take a ladder, Acesius, and go to heaven by thyself," reveals its ultra puritan character. For a long time there was a Novatian church in Constantinople, living on more or less friendly terms with the catholics owing to its opposition to Arianism.

Donatism

A more melancholy exhibition of the schismatic temper was shown in Donatism, which reveals the unbending nature of the African Christians. Its history is the old story of dissatisfaction at the lenity of the catholic church. It arose out of the Diocletian persecution, and turned on the question whether a bishop, Felix of Aptunga, who consecrated Cæcilian of Carthage, was able to confer episcopal authority if he had apostatised by delivering up the Scriptures to the heathen. Two councils acquitted him, but could not convince the African church of his innocence. The majority of the Christians of the province joined in repudiating the rest of the Church which acknowledged Cæcilian, and raised the whole question of the nature of the Church. The history of Donatism belongs to the period after Nicæa, but the schism itself was caused by the peculiar circumstances of the days of persecution, when apostasy was the greatest of sins. The contention of the Donatists was that those guilty of it, if clergy, were deprived of all the grace conferred by ordination; they could not confer spiritual gifts or perform legal sacraments. All who communicated with them fell under the same disability. Thus every church but the Donatists had lost its power, and ceased to be a church. The schism was a local one. No one seems to

have joined it out of Africa, but it was amazingly bitter there, and the catholics were, till the appearance of St. Augustine, a persecuted minority. The country under the Donatists became a scene of disorder; they committed crimes of violence on their opponents, and insulted them in every possible manner. Constantine tried to restore order by force, but persecution made the sect all the fiercer. They had begun by appealing to the emperor; but when they found his decision to be adverse, they cried "What has the emperor to do with the Church?" Their spirit was that of martyrdom pushed beyond the limits of charity: it asserted the complete independence of the Church, and denied the right of the secular power to prevent them from wreaking vengeance on their opponents. Donatism was conquered in the fifth century by Augustine, before whose death the Vandals came and involved catholics and Donatists (whose faith was the same) in a common fate. Once, in the sixth century, it revived, and in the seventh, Christianity in Africa went down in the flood of Mohammedan invasion.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Gnostic followed by Trinitarian Controversy

Gnosticism was at its height towards the close of the second century; but as the Catholic Church developed its organization, or, as in Marcion's system, took a more Christian form it waned. The result of the conflict was to establish among Christians a belief in the actual historical manifestation of Jesus as the Word made flesh. The ground was thus cleared for an enduring controversy, first as to His relation to God, and then to man.

Consequence of Docetism

The Gnostics had laid undue emphasis on one important aspect of the revelation of God through Christ, which the Church had never failed to recognise, namely, that the redemption of man was not an isolated fact in human history; but part of an eternal process. They had pushed this idea to such an extent that the human figure of the Christ disappeared in an abstraction, so that His life became nothing more than a phantasy by which God's nature and purpose was revealed to man. This was *Docetism;* and it was overthrown by the credal profession that Jesus was truly born, truly suffered, and had risen in bodily form. At the same time Christian piety demanded that He should be acknowledged as truly God, and that the belief that God is One should remain unshaken.

Modern Unitarianism unknown

Rightly to understand the controversy which raged within the Church over the doctrine of the Trinity, it is

necessary to divest the mind of modern prejudice as regards what is known as Unitarianism. Those who now find it difficult to believe in the Trinity in Unity do so for reasons as a rule critical or intellectual. They may argue that there is no warrant for the dogma in Scripture; that the passages adduced are not genuine, or are misunderstood; that it was not the original belief of the Christians, etc. Or they may declare that it is not consistent with intellectual honesty to accept a dogma which is self-contradictory, or to represent Jesus as more than a highly gifted religious teacher. For in the controversy, the question is mainly Christological, turning on the relation of Christ to God. But the ancient Monarchians were neither Socinians nor Unitarians; they argued from different premises; and their whole attitude was alien to that of modern days. Yet we shall find that they are charged by their opponents with rash criticism and intellectual arrogance, much as Modernists now are.

A "human" Christ not sought

But in the earliest days of the Church the tendency was not so much to create a purely human Christ as to make the Lord far less so than He appears in the New Testament. That Jesus was supernaturally born of a Virgin presented no difficulty. It was harder to believe that He was born at all. The facts of the life were what troubled all the Gnostics down to Marcion, because they were too subject to worldly and material conditions. No one, not even the Jewish believers, had any difficulty in accepting the supernatural or divine element in the Christ. "The Jew sought after a sign." That is, he demanded something which was more miraculous than what Jesus offered. If He pronounced Him an impostor, it was because He did not supernaturally deliver Himself and the nation. To the Hebrew, there was no difficulty in God

speaking in the person of a man. Indeed that is what He had done in the prophets of old. The Jew was even warranted by his Scriptures in believing that God had appeared *docetically* in human form, as he did to Abraham or Gideon. What proved the real stumbling block to him was, that Jesus was God as well as the Father. It was to him a way out of the difficulty to believe that Jesus was the Christ, a man possessed by the Spirit of the Father, through whom God revealed His will to man.

Adoptionist teaching

Here we have one of the most enduring heresies regarding the person of Jesus and His place in the divine economy, that of Adoptionism. God chose Jesus of Nazareth as a man peculiarly fitted to reveal His will to the world. The moment at which this was done was the baptism. There the Spirit came upon Jesus, and the voice from Heaven proclaimed "Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I begotten Thee," or "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee am I well pleased." There were thus two divine elements, God and the Spirit, and one human element, namely the man Jesus, whom they had chosen. Even if Gentile theologians accepted this, they did so, consciously or unconsciously, under Jewish influence. The Gentile was accustomed to the idea of God becoming man, and also to that of man becoming God. He could well understand how every appearance of a god was the Divine being revealing under different forms.

The economic trinity

Thus, the view of what is called an "economic" Trinity was not unacceptable to those who regarded the mystery as explicable by saying that God manifested Himself in three aspects—those of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that this threefold conception of Him was, as it were, a

temporary expedient or part of the Divine Economy to reveal the One God to the world.

General interest in the controversy

But neither of these explanations satisfied the conscience of the Church; though the rejection of either invariably forced some into the extreme opposed to it. That such a difficult philosophical problem should be confined to the educated class of believers might be expected; but subsequent history shows the reverse to have occurred. The people were generally interested in the discussion, and strong passions were excited. It was not an affair of bishops and scholars, but one of interest to the whole Church. It is a mistake to suppose that these controversies only affected the clergy. On the contrary, theology engrossed the attention of all.

Origin of the Trinitarian controversy

When the work of Irenæus at the close of the second century is compared with that of Tertullian and Hippolytus in the third the progress of the Trinitarian controversy is evident. All are opposed to Gnosticism, but with Irenæus it is far more real than with the two later writers. To Tertullian, Praxeas and to Hippolytus, the Roman Monarchians, are the danger. The period begins with the pontificate of Victor; but the harbingers of the controversy are an Asiatic sect known to us through Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus, who died early in the fifth century. Because they denied the doctrine of the *logos,* Epiphanius calls them the *Alogoi*—men without reason. We know very little about the *Alogoi* except that they were opposed to Cerinthus, the Gnostic, on the one hand, and to Montanism on the other. They denied that the Gospel, Epistle, and Apocalypse, were by the Apostle John, and attributed them to Cerinthus. They upheld the

Marcan tradition that the Gospel really begins with the baptism, and they declared that the prophetic dispensation had entirely come to an end.

Theodotus and the "dynamic" Monarchians

At the beginning of the pontificate of Victor, about 190, a native of Byzantium named Theodotus came to Rome as a teacher. He was admitted by all to be a very learned man, thoroughly acquainted with the exact sciences. He taught that Christ was born of the Virgin by the operation of the Holy Spirit, but for all that was no more than a man, by whom the Spirit worked. Possibly this Theodotus, known as "the leather-worker," was a disciple of the same school as the *Alogoi;* but he differed from them by accepting the Fourth Gospel. He was accused of saying that Christ was a mere man, basing his teaching, not so much on Scripture, as on Aristotle, Euclid, and Galen. His exegesis, it was objected, was unspiritual and hypercritical, paying more attention to grammatical and textual problems than to the spiritual meaning. In the end, Victor cut Theodotus and his followers off from communion with the Church. They tried to start an independent congregation, and hired a man named Natalius to act as their bishop, but Natalius recanted and the sect disappeared.

Theodotus claimed to represent the earlier tradition of Rome

The opinions of Theodotus were carried on by a namesake—Theodotus "the Banker," and Artemas (or Artemus), who maintained that his opinions represented the true Roman tradition which had been corrupted in the days of Victor's successor Zephyrinus. This may be justified by the fact that Hermas, in the *Shepherd,* appears to assert that Jesus was human and the spirit divine. The

school of Theodotus, representing what theologians call "dynamic" Monarchianism, made way for the Trinitarian theories of Praxeas and Sabellius, which are known as modalistic. From the *Philosophumena* of Hippolytus, it appears that this father and his followers rejected Pope Callistus as unorthodox, for trying to mediate between the two extremes. The schism thus created vanished as completely as the faction over which Natalius had temporarily presided. Still the rigorist party to which Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Novatian belonged, were uncompromising Trinitarians, allowing no theories which attempted to rationalise the mystery; and if they failed to impose their discipline on the Church they gave it their theology.

Praxeas

Praxeas appeared as the accuser of the Montanists in Rome. In Tertullian's epigrammatic language, Praxeas "expelled prophecy and introduced heresy, sent the Spirit into banishment and crucified the Father." Except for Tertullian's treatise, Praxeas is unknown, and it may be that the name is given to some more notorious teacher, *e.g.*, Noetus. His theory was that it was the one God who assumed the form of the Son and was crucified. For this reason Tertullian gave the school the name of Patripassians (the Father suffered), to show the absurdity of their doctrine. Callistus, according to Hippolytus, belonged to this party; and here we seem to gain an insight into the doctrinal attitude of the Roman church, which has always been characterised by its preference for practical Christianity rather than abstract truth. The Modalists declared that the Father became the Son by assuming human flesh; and Callistus is said to have offered an explanation, as a *via media,* that the Father suffered with the Son. Both he and his predecessor Zephyrinus whom he advised, appear to have been statesmen rather than theologians,

and to have tried at all costs to avert the schism which men of the type of Hippolytus had no scruple in precipitating; nor can it be said that they were altogether to blame in thinking that unity could be too dearly purchased by insisting on the most mysterious dogmas, in which finality appeared to be impossible.

Sabellius

The controversy now shifted from Rome to the more congenial soil of the East. Sabellius is said to have been a native of the Libyan Pentapolis. Rome, however, where he was excommunicated by Callistus, was the chief scene of his teaching. Whether he left the city is uncertain; but his views became extremely popular in the Pentapolis, and his theology was the bugbear of the eastern teachers who, throughout the fourth century, were obsessed by fear of Sabellianism. Speaking generally, Sabellius considered God to be absolutely one, who was revealed in three *Prosôpa* (the word means a mask, a character in a drama). These three were Father, as Creator, Son, as Saviour, and Holy Spirit. It is possible that Sabellius used the expression *Homoousios* to express the essential unity of the three *Prosôpa,* which would account for the distrust of the word even after it had been incorporated in the Creed by the Council of Nicæa. At any rate, throughout the Arian controversy it is evidently Modalism, or the teaching that Father, Son, and Spirit, are but temporary revelations of God, that was so strenuously opposed.

Jesus and the Logos

The question which really touched the piety of Christians was the identity of the *Logos* and Jesus. This is the teaching of the Fourth Gospel, that the Word was with God in the Beginning, and that all things were made by

Him. Also that the Word was made flesh. Jesus, then, was the incarnate Word: but what did this mean? In the first place, what is the Word? In the second, what is meant by the Word becoming flesh? Sabellius said, practically, because the Word is God, there is no distinction between the One and the Word. On the other hand, the more orthodox said that the Word is distinct from the Father though they are inseparable, for the Father is always begetting the Word. This was Origen's view, but to maintain the distinction he inclined to subordinate the persons in the Trinity to one another.

The two Dionysii

This was the trend of Alexandrian theology, and led to a most interesting correspondence between Dionysius of Rome, and his namesake of Alexandria. Dionysius of Rome received a report that the bishop of Alexandria had erred in three particulars. (1) He was accused of denying that the Son was not always Son, or saying that once the Son was not; (2) of naming the Father without the Son, and the Son without the Father; (3) of denying that the Son was of one substance with the Father, but was alien (*xenos*) in substance (*ousia*). This, according to Dionysius of Rome, was to teach Tritheism, *i.e.*, that Father, Son, and Spirit were three Gods. The Alexandrian answered these objections by an appeal to the creed of the Church. He did not use the expression *homoousios*, because it is not in Scripture; he could not, by his very use of the word Father, have ignored the Son. But what is really important to us is that the esteem in which Dionysius was held a century after his death caused Athanasius to write in his defence, as is also the tone of the Roman letter. The pope is less concerned with the speculative error than with its practical consequences, such as the encouragement of Marcionism. Harnack

points out that the letter is the same in tone as the *Tome* which Leo the Great sent to Flavian, bishop of Constantinople, in the fifth century, and resembles Pope Agatho's letter to the emperor Constantine IV in the seventh century. The tradition of the great western see persisted from a very early date.

Paul of Samosata

The most startling phenomenon in the early Trinitarian controversy was the condemnation by the Church of Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, the third prelate in the Christian world. Since the days of Ignatius, and long after Bishop Paul's day, the Christians of Antioch held the humanity of Christ to be of the highest importance. It was at Antioch that Ignatius learned to regard *docetism*—the denial of the reality of the Lord's human existence—as the worst of heresies; and in the fifth century, Nestorianism erred in its excessive insistence on the human nature of the Christ born of the Virgin. The heresy of Paul was his refusal to completely identify the Word of God with Jesus. He was accused of refusing to allow hymns to be addressed to the Saviour. His doctrine, in brief, was that God consists of Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus was Himself a man, and no more, but by His pre-eminent goodness He was made the receptacle of the Divine Word. According to an expression of Paul's, quoted by Harnack, Jesus could not have been "good," in our sense of the word, unless He had enjoyed some power of choice; for "what is attained by nature has no merit"; which may mean—if Jesus was from all eternity God the Word, He was by nature impeccable. Now it is no merit to be perfect, if naturally perfect, any more than it is meritorious to be naturally clever. In other words, the more truly human our Lord is, the more valuable is He to us, if He were "tempted, yet without sin." But the

theologians of the age were more interested in Christ as the revealer of the Father, as the Word made flesh, than as the exemplar of human life. The important thing in their eyes was the identification of the Jesus of history with the eternal Logos. Consequently, Paul was deposed by a synod of bishops at Antioch, in 269, and their sentence was ratified by the Emperor Aurelian. From that time the pre-existence of Jesus as the Word became, irrevocably, a part of the dogma of the Church.

Modern contempt for dogma unreasonable

One of the besetting sins of modern theologians is that they are inclined to neglect the study of dogmatics, and in their zeal to assert what the Church ought to teach, neglect to ascertain what it actually declares. They therefore deprecate the long controversies as to what ought to be believed as waste of energy which could have been better applied. But it is at least worth enquiring whether the importance of the questions disputed did not justify the care bestowed in trying to solve them. The best answer is the simple fact that they are as pressing today as they were in the primitive Church. It is of the highest importance for us to decide whether in Jesus God was really manifested, whether He offered us a real salvation, or simply gave us a morality more or less superior to that of other teachers. It is still of interest to determine whether He appeared a God on earth, acting, talking, and suffering as though He were a man, whereas He was nothing of the kind; or whether He bore our nature, and shared our sorrows and temptations in the truest sense. The "fathers" faced these problems honestly. They may have employed a language which is that of philosophy we can hardly appreciate; their arguments, their exegesis, may not be what we can use or assent to; but at least they saw the problems and presented them to the best of their

ability. Yet, when all is said, the manly exercises of the mind by the Fathers, the Schoolmen, the Theologians, are healthier than the sentimentalities of some modern teachers, who, when they try to be up to date, don the discarded garments of a Theodotus or Paul of Samosata, and try to persuade us that they are presenting us with something that is entirely new.

CHAPTER XX

EARLY CHRISTIAN LEARNING

Christianity and intellectual activity

The new religion gloried in its simplicity; it appealed to the childlike character of its converts; it repudiated the wisdom of this world. What it demanded was faithful adherence to the precepts of One who describes Himself as "meek and lowly of heart." At a later date it set itself against secular learning. But this did not prevent its attracting or retaining some of the best minds of the age in which it was making its most startling conquests. Its doctrines, simple as they appeared at first, in the end stimulated intense intellectual activity, and exercised the mind on the profoundest of problems. This has been often considered a drawback to the promotion of pure Christian belief, morality, and conduct; but it is undeniable that the greatest of Christian thinkers have not been as a rule backward in these respects, and piety and morals have never flourished in days of intellectual stagnation. The Christian community in the first three centuries was fairly representative of its time—it included the poor and ignorant, though it relieved the one and educated the other; most of its adherents belonged to the middle class, and at its head were people who were well qualified to take a high place in the contemporary world of intellect. In this the members of the Church could generally hold their own.

Athenagoras the Apologist

The *Apologies* are written by well-read men conversant with the literature of ancient days. As Athenagoras was omitted when the apologies were discussed he may here be mentioned. As literary productions of some skill, both his *Apology* and his treatise *On the Resurrection* justify his being entitled a philosopher and a Christian, and it is evident that no one who was unacquainted with polite letters could have written them.

The *Apology,* or *Embassy* (*presbeia*), for the Christians, addressed to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, is an elaborate defense of the Christians designed for men who were not only emperors but, as Athenagoras says, philosophers. It is not a popular apology; but one made by a scholar for scholars. The unity of God is shown to have been upheld by the poets (Euripides' lost plays are quoted), as well by the philosophers Plato and Aristotle. There is much learning expended over the names and images of gods being modern in origin. Athenagoras evidently has Homer at his fingers' end; he quotes Herodotus, Hesiod, Pindar, Callimachus, within the compass of a very small treatise.

Teacher at Alexandria

A tradition, not of much value, says that Athenagoras was head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria. Here were the great lights of learned Christendom, the most widely read of whom was Clement. Origen is pre-eminent as a biblical scholar, and in Dionysius one seems to find all the qualities which ought to characterise an erudite Christian.

Clement of Alexandria

Something has already been said of Clement's scheme of education and his literary labours. Here it is neces-

sary to confine ourselves to his wide culture and immense reading. Like many other learned men he has given posterity a record of teachers whose names would otherwise have perished, because they left behind them disciples rather than books. Pantænus, "the Sicilian bee," was his predecessor at Alexandria, and the master to whom he owed so much. He was educated as a heathen, which accounts for the difference between him and Origen, the great genius who succeeded him. His life was that of a scholar, uneventful, and somewhat detached from the controversies of his age. But he never forgot the practical side of Christian life, or the seriousness of its high calling.

Wide reading of Clement

What distinguishes Clement is the variety of his reading. He was, in his heathen days, eclectic as a philosopher, and equally so as a student. His works are a perfect mine of quotations from lost authors, including the comic dramatists. The profundity of his knowledge has been questioned, and it is at least possible that some of it was second hand and uncritical; but this does not detract from the fact that Clement was a very learned man. He had, by his own account, travelled far in search of teachers, finally discovering Pantænus as his last and best master at Alexandria. Like many others who have read much and devoted their energies to a cause, rather than to exact scholarship, Clement may have been careless in his use of his authorities; but he was certainly a conspicuous example of how a Christian writer could meet the heathen with their own weapons. It is a remarkable fact that three great Alexandrians, two Christians—Clement and Origen, and Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist, all ended their careers outside the city where they had established their reputation. Like Origen, Clement spent his last days in Syria.

Books quoted in the address to the Greeks

As an example of the use of the classical authors by a Christian apologist one may take the *Address to the Greeks,* attributed to Justin Martyr. It is quite a short treatise, but it is one continuous appeal to the poets, of course pre-eminently to Homer, and to the philosophers from Thales onwards. The differences between Plato and Aristotle are carefully noted. Josephus and Philo are used, as was customary, to prove that the antiquity of the teaching of Moses was recognised by the sages of Greece; Orpheus is quoted at length to prove God's unity, which is also taught by Plato and Pythagoras. The writer, it may be added, knows not only the *Timæus,* a book much studied by Christians, but quotes Plato's *Phædrus* and *Republic.* He relates how he visited Cumæ, and how his guide showed him all the sights of the *basilica* of the Sibyl. But enough has been said to prove that the Christians, in order to meet their opponents, equipped themselves with all the available learning of their age, and though their arguments are often stereotyped, they were calculated to convince those to whom they were addressed.

Origen the Hexapla

Origen, as a scholar, would have been as great a wonder in any age as he was in his own. As has been indicated above, he received the best education of his time; for his father Leonides had recognised and fostered his remarkable abilities. His knowledge of the learning of his age is attested by his disciples, notably by Gregory Thaumaturgus; but here it may be well to dwell on his methods of scholarly investigation, which no one without a careful education could have pursued, and are surprisingly modern in their thoroughness. Dissatisfied with the text of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, Origen projected a vast work to enable scholars to find

out the truth about the exact language of Scripture. He was able, in a measure, to overcome the initial difficulty of learning Hebrew; for the Jews jealously guarded their language, and many Christians seem to have regarded it as heretical to study it. But Origen's acquaintance with Hebrew does not seem to have been profound, and his derivation of words is often absurd. Still he had sufficient knowledge to produce a Hebrew version transliterated into Greek, which necessitated some acquaintance with the vocalisation accepted by the Jews; for the Hebrew version was unpointed. In his search for other Greek translations, in addition to those of LXX, Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus, which with the Hebrew, and the Hebrew in Greek letters, made the *Hexapla,* Origen wandered far and wide. He found three more versions, one in a jar in Jericho, and two others in Nicopolis in Greece.

Eusebius has preserved Origen's critical remarks on the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "It is not," he says, "in the style of Paul, who acknowledges that he is 'rude in speech' (II Cor. xi, 6), but its diction is purer Greek. The thoughts, however, are worthy of the apostle." Origen thinks that the Epistle is by a disciple who remembered his master's teaching. There are those who hold it was by Paul, as no tradition is without cause. Some attribute it to Clement, others to Luke. "But who wrote the Epistle God knows." Unfortunately the commentary from which the extract is taken is lost, but the fragment is a good example of scholarly discernment in a reverent Christian critic.

Dionysius of Alexandria

Dionysius of Alexandria gives an even more interesting example of a scholar's estimate of the Revelation of St. John. He appears to have been one of the wisest and

most amiable men who ever adorned the episcopate. He was most highly esteemed by Eusebius of Cæsarea, and in after days his successor Athanasius wrote to defend his orthodoxy in the matter of the doctrine of the Trinity. In every controversy in which he was engaged Dionysius emerges with credit for his charitable and large-minded view of the point at issue. As a scholar he appears to great advantage in his controversy with the Millenarians of Egypt, who held, following a bishop named Nepos, that there would be a reign of a thousand years of worldly prosperity for the saints under Christ.

The authorship of the book of Revelation

The book in which these views were expressed was called the *Refutation of the Allegorists*. Nothing can exceed the courtesy of Dionysius' treatise in reply. He speaks of Nepos in terms calculated to calm his admirers, and refutes his arguments by an appeal, not in the usual controversial style, to prejudice and passion, but to scholarship. The way he proves that the Apocalypse was not by the hand of the author of the Fourth Gospel is one of the best specimens of ancient criticism. He admits that the writer of the Apocalypse was inspired and that his name was John; but from the language and the entire character of the book, it could not be the work of John the son of Zebedee, who was the author of the Fourth Gospel and the first Epistle. There were probably therefore two Johns in Asia, the Apostle and the Seer. Eusebius gives the argument in a long chapter of his history (vii, 25).

Hippolytus and the Philosophumena

Turning to the West, but not yet to the Christians who employed Latin, Hippolytus is a good example of learning in a great churchman. His attack on Gnosticism is quite

different from that delivered by Irenæus, the object being to show that the heresies are, not so much unapostolic novelties, as the republication of pagan philosophies in a new guise. The style of Hippolytus has led some to believe that the *Philosophumena* is not so much a formal treatise as a series of lecture notes collected by a disciple; and certainly Hippolytus does display, sometimes, signs of the artifices of the lecturer rather than the technique of a writer. However, the treatment of the subject, even if but undertaken with but moderate success, demands considerable learning, and Hippolytus certainly covers a wide field. In his fourth book, to take an example, he treats of diviners and magic. Much is said to be quoted from Sextus Empiricus, but it is very curious and interesting reading, especially as regards the measurements of the heavens and the distances of the planets from the earth, the characters of those born under the different signs of the Zodiac, and the significance of the numerals in names. Hippolytus also exposes the tricks of the magicians, writing with invisible ink, magical incantations and the like. His quotations are numerous and varied. And, as the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans presupposes anything but an ignorant community of Christians in the city, so the lectures of Irenæus and Hippolytus demanded an educated audience: for those controversies with Gnostics and later heretics could only have taken place among people capable of appreciating the points at issue. Christianity was attracting the educated, and one of the chief criticisms levelled against it by modern writers is that it had by the third century become too much interested in intellectual problems.

Tertullian and secular education

The chief opponent of philosophy, Tertullian, was certainly not open to the reproach of being ignorant of the

secular wisdom which he despised. Yet it is remarkable that in his work on *Idolatry,* in which he is perfectly uncompromising on most points, and lays down rules which no Christian could observe without almost entirely withdrawing from social life, he cannot forbid the education of children in the usual way, which, of course, included the study of heathen mythology. This, indeed, was one of the great difficulties under which the Church laboured. It was a choice between pagan education or none. For education then, and on to almost yesterday, meant practically the Greek and Latin classics, and aimed at correct expression. Science, mathematics (which, by the way, usually mean astrology), lay outside the ordinary curriculum: to be educated it was a *sine qua non* that a man should have his classical authors at his finger tips, and should be able to quote them on every occasion. The system of education, like the Roman law, was so strongly organised that, at most, Christianity influenced it, without really penetrating beyond its surface.

Tertullian's extensive reading

Like many lawyers, Tertullian was a man of miscellaneous reading, and his writings abound in curious illustrations of his subject. These are conspicuous in his treatises on the *Soldiers' Crown* and *On Baptism.* For example, he ends the argument that a soldier should not wear a crown by an allusion to initiation to the Mysteries of Mithra, where the candidate rejects a crown, because he is taught to say "Mithra is my crown." It is said that his Latinity is provincial and Punic; but Niebuhr, according to Neander, points out that this alleged provincialism is due to his large vocabulary and employment of words and expressions taken from ancient Latin writers. He tells us he also wrote in Greek, but none of his works in that

language have survived. In a word, Tertullian is as uncompromising a Christian, and it may be added, as credulous, and yet as free from the reproach of lack of culture, as John Wesley himself.

The Octavius of Minucius Felix

Another Latin writer of exceptional culture is Minucius Felix, whose *Octavius* is sufficient proof that the Christians were, at a very early date, able to appeal to the educated classes. Not only, says Baehrens, his latest editor, is his learning to be admired, but also the art with which he arranged his materials. "Look," he continues, "at his perfect mastery in discussion, and in addition at his beautiful employment of the figures of rhetoric and the variety of them, then observe how delightfully he selects and composes sentences imitated from Cicero and the poets, etc."

The last example of a Christian apologist who employed the best Latinity of his age shall be Arnobius, the master of another church writer, Lactantius. Like many famous men, St. Augustine for example, he had been a teacher of rhetoric. He entered the Church late in life, and does not show any considerable knowledge of Scripture. Jerome, no mean judge, praises the clarity of his style, though he is occasionally careless, confused, and vague in doctrinal points. Of his learning the late Dr. Moule, Bishop of Durham, himself a finished classical scholar, remarks: "As a storehouse of old Latinity and of allusions to points of antiquity, to heathen mythology and ceremonial, to law, education, and amusements—his work is of the greatest interest and importance." Arnobius wrote early in the fourth century, and is among the last of the pre-Nicene writers.

Enough has been said to indicate that Christianity was

fully able to hold its own in educated society; and this is remarkable, because many distinguished men of letters, even after the complete triumph of the Church, steadily ignored its very existence.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HISTORY OF EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA

Eusebius moderate and impartial

One of the most interesting characters in the history of early Christianity, not only on account of the debt which we owe to him as our indispensable authority, but for many other reasons, is Eusebius of Cæsarea. He belonged to the second generation of the disciples of Origen; he witnessed the persecution of Diocletian, the peace of the Church, the great Council of Nicæa, the triumphant establishment of Christianity under Constantine. He was an unwearied student, and at the same time took an active part in the great events of the age. He combined the functions of a biblical scholar, apologist, antiquarian, historian, chronographer, and panegyrist, with the experience of an ecclesiastical adviser of the emperor. In temper he was conservative, cautious, and conciliatory. He passed through a great persecution without being either a martyr or an apostate, and through the Arian controversy as one who favoured neither extreme. If not cast in an heroic mould, he was a tireless worker, to whom the Church owes too much to ignore his claim to gratitude.

Events of his life to 325

The most important events in the life of Eusebius are subsequent to the Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325; and for the present purpose it is enough to say that he was the pupil and enthusiastic admirer of the martyr Pamphilus, in memory of whom he called himself Eusebius (the son) of

Pamphilus. In 296 he actually saw the Emperor Diocletian in Palestine, accompanied by the youthful Constantine. A few years later he was an eye-witness in Syria and Egypt of the terrible suffering of the martyrs, among them his beloved Pamphilus. Pamphilus was evidently a wealthy man and an enthusiastic collector of books, and of which Eusebius had the use, sharing as he did in his friend's literary labours; and he had also the great Christian library of Cæsarea, with Origen's *Hexapla*.

Bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine

After the persecution was over Eusebius was elected bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, and it is greatly to his credit that, though pressed to take the patriarchal see of Antioch, he refused to leave his original bishopric. He was doubtless influenced by conscientious scruples which prevented him violating the ecclesiastical rule against removing from one bishopric to another; but it would have been no small sacrifice to leave the comparative leisure and library of Cæsarea for the troublous throne of the Patriarch of Antioch. He continued his library labours till the day of his death *circa* 341.

Purpose of Eusebius

Like many historians, Eusebius had a purpose in view which manifests itself in all his works. He is preeminently an apologist; and his design is to show how God from the very first worked for the revelation of Himself in Christ. In his great work he attempts what no apologist had hitherto done, to show by a history of the Church how God accomplished His purpose, and thus he describes himself as entering a hitherto untrodden wilderness. It is as an historian that Eusebius will here be regarded, and after a survey of the field of his labours it will be possible to make an estimate of their value.

Eusebius' historical work

The four great contributions to history by Eusebius are: (1) his *Chronicle,* (2 and 3) his apologetic works, the *Præparatio* and *Demonstratio,* (4) his *Ecclesiastical History.* His *Life of Constantine* is confessedly a panegyric, or composition in praise of the emperor. The *Chronicle* was compiled before the *History,* and, whether the *Præparatio* and *Demonstratio* were earlier or later, they supplement it. The *Chronicle* is intended to demonstrate the falsity of the Gentile contention that Christianity is a new religion. Eusebius, working on the basis of the *Chronicle* of Africanus, a Christian of the third century, shows the antiquity of the Jewish nation and records, and therefore of the Christian revelation, which he contends was in the world from the first. He makes Abraham the starting point of his *Chronology,* which is an indispensable guide to all knowledge of classical antiquity.

The Præparatio and Demonstratio

The *Præparatio* is addressed to heathen; and its object is to show that the Christians are justified in accepting the books of the Hebrews and in rejecting the heathen religions. It is as full of quotations from ancient, and often lost pagan, writings, as the *Church History* is of extracts from early Christian literature. The *Demonstratio* continues the argument, and deals mainly with the fulfilment of Hebrew prophecy by Christ. Here Eusebius makes unsparing use of the versions of Scripture in the *Hexapla.* Much of the work is lost, the *Præparatio* being complete in twenty books; and the most interesting part of it is the argument for the Faith drawn from the character of the Saviour. Taken as a whole, the two books are among the greatest Christian apologies, though Eusebius

does not show the acumen of Origen when he answers Celsus, or the eloquence of the great Latin apologists.

History of the Church

Having surveyed the past from the Gentile and Jewish standpoints, Eusebius commences his history of the Christian Church from the birth of the Saviour to the final victory of Constantine over his last rival, Licinius. The object is to give (1) the succession of the apostles and the chronological data, (2) the order of events, (3) the distinguished rulers of the Church, (4) the heretics, (5) the well-deserved punishment of the Jews, (6) the persecutions of the Church.

Christianity in the world from the first. Book I

The first chapters in which the history is introduced are designed to show that the religion revealed by Christ the Word, is neither new nor strange. After the fall of Adam men became utterly barbarous and brutal. Nevertheless, the Word of God was among them revealing Himself, sometimes in human form. The world was never entirely destitute of the truth, and was being prepared for the manifestation thereof in Jesus Christ. All righteous men from the beginning were Christians in truth, if not in name; but this was not "natural" but revealed religion, and it was preserved among a nation widely dispersed and indestructible, till in the Christians arose a true Israel.

The rest of the first book deals with the birth of our Saviour and with the history of the time, Eusebius making use of Josephus and also of Africanus. He discusses the two genealogies of the Christ in Matthew and Luke; the testimony of Josephus as to the death of the Baptist, and gives as well the doubtful passage about Jesus. The book concludes with the correspondence between Our

Lord and Abgar of Edessa, which Eusebius says he translated from the Syriac.

Book II

In the second book, the Acts of the Apostles and Josephus are the main authorities as far as they go; and the whole concludes with the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul at Rome. Eusebius supplements the narrative by various additions: Tertullian's account of Tiberius proposing to the Senate to recognise Christ as God, Pilate's suicide, Hegesippus' story of the death of James, the Lord's brother, Mark's preaching in Alexandria, and his being succeeded in the bishopric by Annianus.

Method of Eusebius

Here we have a clue to the method of Eusebius, as well as an indication of his value as an historian. He quotes authors, with whom we are familiar, as his authorities, others of whom we should have known nothing but for him; and in addition he makes statements, unsupported by authority, probably based on the accepted tradition of the Church. Had he known who related Pilate's death, or Mark's preaching in Alexandria, and especially who had told of Paul being beheaded and Peter crucified at Rome, he would certainly have informed his readers. On the other hand, he has a twofold account of the death of James, the Just, by Hegesippus and Josephus, both of whom he quotes. It is interesting to notice, in his chapter in Book I on the Seventy whom the Lord appointed in addition to the Twelve, that he distinguishes Cephas whom Paul opposed at Antioch from Peter the Apostle, on the authority of Clement, and makes Thaddeus, who was sent to Abgar, a member of the larger body and not of the Twelve.

Book III

In the third book, Eusebius begins by saying where the apostles preached, quoting from a lost commentary of Origen. Here his honesty is as apparent as his critical judgment, for, as has been already shown, there was no lack of tradition concerning the labours of the Twelve in his time. He then discusses the genuineness of the letters attributed to the apostles, rejecting II Peter, as well as his so called *Acts* and *Apocalypse*. This book is of special value, because Eusebius dwells on the Canon of Scripture, referring again and again to the subject; and in the 25th Chapter he gives the books accepted by Christians as undoubted, as of questionable genuineness, and those which must be rejected as spurious. The book contains many other things of interest. Josephus's account of the siege of Jerusalem, the stories related by Clement of the old age of the Apostle John, Pliny's correspondence with Trajan, Ignatius, and his letters on his way to martyrdom, and the writings of Papias. This can hardly be called history, as there is nothing approaching a continuous narrative, nor was such possible for Eusebius to construct out of his materials. What he has preserved is invaluable to the knowledge of the first days.

Book IV

The fourth book opens with lists of the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. The care Eusebius takes in preserving the order of the episcopal successions is remarkable, and his being bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine gave him special opportunity for knowing about Jerusalem. He says the church there, down to Hadrian's time, was entirely Jewish, and the chronology of the bishops was nowhere to be found. However, he learned from documents that there were fourteen bishops from James, the Lord's brother, to the second destruction of

Jerusalem by Hadrian, and he gives their names. He then, in a very brief chapter, relates the war of Barcochba, on the authority of an otherwise unknown author, Aristo of Pella. His testimony that all the Christians of Jerusalem were Hebrews is important, because it indicates that, after its destruction by Titus, Jerusalem appears to have become an entirely Jewish city to which other people were not attracted. Of the war in the time of Hadrian scarcely anything was known, even to a great scholar who lived in the country. This book is of much value for the use made of Hegesippus, Dionysius of Corinth, and Justin Martyr, whose works are enumerated. A letter of Antoninus (probably a forgery) to the Common Assembly of Asia, and a rescript of Hadrian regarding the Christians, are also preserved. But, though it is in other MSS., the most valuable part of the book is the letter of the church of Smyrna, giving an account of the martyrdom of Polycarp. Eusebius assigns this to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, whereas it really belongs to that of his predecessor Antoninus Pius, an example of the historian's inaccuracy, remarkable in one who had made a study of chronology. Chapters are devoted to Melito of Sardis, who gives the canonical books of the Old Testament, and to many other ecclesiastical writers. And here it is possible that Eusebius' interest in the Canon of Scripture is, in part, to be accounted for by the fact that he lived through the Diocletian persecution, when the sacred books were ordered to be surrendered, and it was extremely important to know what book should be handed over to the magistrates without incurring the guilt of being a *traditor*.

Book V

The fifth book is of great value, for it contains copious extracts from the letter of the churches of Vienne and

Lyons. Many of Eusebius' extracts are disappointingly brief; but this, and the martyrdom of Polycarp, are satisfactorily complete. Among the quotations from Irenæus there are interesting, though incomplete ones, about the continuance of miraculous powers in the Church. This illustrates the historian's remarkable sanity in keeping the marvellous, not entirely, but to a great extent out of his narrative. To show how far he does this, critics have fixed on a miracle, related by him, as an example of his credulity, which may well have happened. When there had been a peculiarly brutal massacre of Christians in a Syrian town, the pillars of the houses are said to have been suffused with moisture on a fine day, as if they wept for the sufferers. Even though the miracle may be denied, the phenomenon may well have taken place. But for this book we should have known but little of Asiatic Montanism, the testimonies being here mostly first-hand. The Paschal question is also dealt with, the action of Victor, and Irenæus' letter to him. Throughout the book Irenæus is most prominent; and as his works are only extant in Latin we owe the Greek version of parts entirely to Eusebius.

Books VI and VII

In the sixth and seventh books the most conspicuous authorities are Origen and Dionysius of Alexandria, who are the two scholars specially revered by Eusebius. As he approaches his own time, the historian becomes rather less than more interesting. But we are deeply indebted to him for his extracts from the works of Dionysius, and especially for the account of his controversy with Nepos and the Millenarians on the authorship of the Apocalypse of John.

Book VIII. Gibbon's accusation of Eusebius as partial

In the second chapter of the eighth book there is a passage in which Eusebius says that he was unwilling to write of the things which discredited the Church in the persecution of Diocletian, but would only relate events which might be for the benefit of posterity. This has provoked Gibbon severely to attack him as guilty of wilful suppression of facts in order to misrepresent the history of the Church. No accusation could be more unjust or ungenerous. One has only to read the first chapter to see how Eusebius bewails the backslidings of his age with all the fervour of an ancient prophet. In this book there is an account of the Diocletian persecution, which happened in Eusebius' own time, down to Galerius's edict in 311 commanding the Christians to be tolerated and even imploring their prayers.

Martyrs of Palestine. Books IX and X

Then follows the so-called *Martyrs of Palestine.* The ninth and tenth books take us from Galerius's edict to the final victory of Constantine over Licinius in 323, when Constantine became sole emperor. The *History of the Church* cannot have been completed long after this date.

Estimate of work

Such then is the scope of the first Church history, and it is noteworthy that no historian presumed to cover the ground independently. After the Arian controversy had begun, several historians tried their hands on the same period, but the story as told by Eusebius was accepted as final. This is all the more remarkable, as he was considered by many as heretical in his views about the Trinity. It can hardly be considered a great history. It is not consecutive, it lacks literary charm, there are but rarely arresting remarks in the course of it. In places the

language is turgid and obscure. But as to its value there can be no doubt. We should know practically nothing of the early Church without it. Some of the selections from other writings are admirably chosen; and the author's enthusiasm for the heroic deeds of the Church is evident. He is well informed where the authorities were accessible to him. Of the western Church he knows but little.

Eusebius is truly the father of Church history. He made future generations interested in it. Jerome and Rufinus in the West, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret in the East, followed in his steps. From St. Luke to Eusebius no one appears to have cared to tell the story of the Church; after the appearance of the *Ecclesiastical History*, many undertook the work of continuing it. But as he claims, Eusebius started upon his task without any example to guide him in his undertaking: and every Church historian must acknowledge that the pioneer is the learned bishop of Cæsarea.

CHAPTER XXII

CONSTANTINE

Decay of the empire in the third century

For nearly a century the Roman empire had been on the down-grade. The frontiers were unable to be held against the increasing pressure of barbarian invasion. The population was steadily decreasing. The government was on the point of dissolution. It was the age of what have been called the "barrack emperors." The soldiers saluted some leader as Augustus, only to murder him after a few years, or, perhaps, a few months. There were almost as many usurpers as there were provinces. At one time there were so many that they were called the Thirty Tyrants. From the death of Commodus in 192, to the accession of Diocletian in 284, there were twenty-seven legitimate Augusti. Septimius Severus reigned for seventeen years, leaving seventy-five years for twenty-six emperors. Several popes during this period were martyred, nevertheless there were but thirteen of them. The armies were as unsuccessful as they were mutinous: one emperor sustained a crushing defeat at the hands of the Goths: another, with his army was destroyed by the Persians. Plagues, earthquakes, famines, marked the course of the century. The barbarians got into Greece and destroyed Delphi.

Revival

At last Rome rallied under three soldier emperors, Claudius, Aurelian and Probus (269-282), and her enemies were taught to respect her arms. Then a ruler arose

in Diocletian who held the empire for twenty years, when he abdicated, having proved himself an organiser who could bring some order out of chaos. His true successor was Constantine, who accomplished his design of transferring the real centre of government to the East where the Roman empire continued to exist till finally overthrown by the Turks in 1453. The same Constantine, in a very different way from that adopted by Diocletian, gave the Roman world the unity in religion his predecessor had desired.

Diocletian

Diocletian's policy was to put an end to the emperor's holding his power at the caprice of the military, and to make his people respect the government as a heaven-sanctioned institution. Hitherto, in theory, the emperor had been the first citizen of the Republic; henceforth he was to be regarded as an unapproachable despot, hedged in by the protection of an elaborate court etiquette, and treated as a superhuman person. Diocletian took the divine name of Jovius, which we may render "Vicar of Jupiter." This paved the way for almost a new language in imperial government. The different departments became "sacred." The "sacred palace," the "sacred college," the "sacred largess," all things pertaining to the emperor being thus designated. The adjective has been transferred to the administration of the church of Rome.

Diocletian also realised that the interests of the Empire required the fact to be realised that "East was East" and "West was West" and though the Roman world was always one in theory, the administration was placed in the hands of two "Augusti," Diocletian taking the East, and giving the West to a colleague, Maximian, who was called Herculius, "Vicar of Hercules." These two emperors each adopted a son with the title of Cæsar; and after they had

reigned for twenty years, the two Cæsars were to succeed as Augusti.

Further, it had become clear that Rome was no longer the real seat of the Empire. Those who ruled must live nearer the frontier where the danger spots were. So Diocletian made his capital at Nicomedia in Bithynia, and Maximian at Milan in northern Italy. Thus was prepared Constantine's great exploit of founding a New Rome in the city which bears his name. The two Cæsars, and successors of the Augusti, were Galerius, a rough uncultured man, but a great general, who was associated with Diocletian, and Constantius Chlorus, the father of Constantine the Great, who was the colleague of Maximian. This arrangement gave the Empire an orderly government and time to revive after the disasters of the previous century.

To understand the reign of Constantine, which covers no less than thirty-one years, it is absolutely necessary to realise that it was a continuation of the policy of Diocletian. Whatever judgment we may form of that great emperor's arrangements, they had the merit of permanence, and were the cause of the surprising vitality of the eastern Roman empire, which held its own and became the bulwark of Europe as against Asia, thereby giving it time to organise the civilisation of the Middle Ages.

Diocletian persecution

At the very end of Diocletian's reign he consented to the persecution which bears his name. Now that the imperial authority had been restored, and with it peace and order, it was decided to give it a religious unity, and with this object in view to destroy the Christian Church, the one internal power which was as well organised as the Empire itself. It was already an *imperium in imperio*, and this could not be tolerated.

Diocletian had, up to the last years of his reign, not only tolerated, but encouraged the Christians, many of whom filled offices of trust under him. Both his wife and daughters were Christians. The emperor had spent vast sums in making Nicomedia worthy of being his capital; and in close proximity to his palace a Christian Church had been allowed to be built. But Diocletian was about to abdicate, and his successor Galerius, under the influence it is said of his mother, was bitterly anti-Christian. Diocletian therefore agreed to allow the suppression of the Church without bloodshed. The Neo-Platonist philosophers had also a hand in the matter. Porphyry and Hierocles had commenced a literary attack on the Church; and their party doubtless supposed that if severe measures were taken it could be destroyed, and all united under a syncretistic religion which acknowledged the majesty of Rome. The army also was suspected, not without some reason, of being infected with a Christianity which connoted disloyalty. Refusals to honour the standards, and to accept donatives in the usual manner, had been accompanied by apparently mutinous symptoms. At any rate, in the opinion of the imperial advisers the restored Roman empire could never remain at unity if a religion alien to its whole spirit was permitted to flourish in its midst. Accordingly, it was resolved to extirpate the Church. The buildings were to be destroyed, the books burned, and all who practised the religion severely punished. It was a battle for life between the Church and the Empire; until at last a truce was made in which Constantine took the leading part.

Persecution severe, but legal

The persecution lasted for eight years, and was the severest and most protracted the Church had ever known. The Christians endured much; in some places like Syria,

Egypt, and the provinces of Africa, their sufferings were terrible, and many were put to death; but it was always under forms of law, and it is creditable to the Roman government that there were no wholesale massacres either by the soldiery or the mob. At last, the emperors saw that it was hopeless to try to exterminate Christianity by law. Galerius, who had instituted the persecution, is called by the author of the book on the *Deaths of the Persecutors* the Evil Beast; but he had the sense to submit to the inevitable. He was dying in 311; and just before his end he issued an edict, in his own name and that of his colleagues, somewhat awkwardly attempting to justify his former conduct, giving the Christians liberty to worship in their own way, and asking for their prayers.

Constantine emperor

In the meantime, Constantine was rising in both fortune and reputation. If we are to believe the author of the *Deaths*, Galerius had done all he could to prevent his being associated with the Empire, and Constantine prudently escaped from the palace of the tyrant and joined his father Constantine in Britain. He arrived in time to witness his death, and was immediately proclaimed Augustus by the army of Britain at York, May 1, 306. Galerius, the senior emperor, recognised Constantine as a colleague, and sent him the insignia of his rank. For the first years of his reign Constantine had work enough repelling the Germans. Then began a series of wars against his colleagues in the West, which ended by making him master of half of the Roman world.

Maxentius

His chief opponent was Maxentius, the son of Diocletian's colleague Maximian, who occupied Rome and ruled over Italy and Africa. Constantine's worst enemies have nothing but evil to say of Maxentius; and he seems to

have been a licentious tyrant. It was the war with Maxentius which made Constantine the champion of the Christians. He and his father were more educated than the rest of the Diocletian emperors; and Constantius is credited with having been very lenient in enforcing the law against the Christians, and we do not hear of any horrible cruelties in his dominions. Constantine was probably always inclined to a monotheistic worship, and was in partial sympathy with the Christians on that account. At any rate, one may be fairly sure that he knew something about Christianity, had conceived a certain admiration for it, and realised in it a powerful ally. Warned by a vision or a dream, just before he encountered Maxentius outside Rome, he adopted the Cross as his standard, invoked Jesus as his God, and utterly defeated his opponent, whose head was borne in triumph into the city.

Constantine and the Church

From this time Constantine began to show constantly increasing indulgence to the Christian Church. It was necessary for him to be extremely cautious, for the enemies of the Faith were powerful and bitter. They had rallied in the West under Maxentius, and in the East under Maximin Daza, the rival of Galerius' appointee, Licinius, who at this time was on the side of Constantine. When both the rivals were overthrown Licinius joined Constantine at Milan, whence, in 313, they jointly issued the famous edict. Constantine had himself more coldly granted toleration to the Christians in the previous year; but now they and every one in the Empire was given leave to worship God as they pleased.

Church regarded by Constantine as a unit

But such toleration had never been consistent with the policy of the Empire, especially in an age when the gov-

ernment was interfering with every department of life, and regulating all men's actions. It will soon be apparent that Constantine, in recognising Christians, resolved to regard them as a single body, with which he could deal corporately, and that the ultimate result of his polity was for the catholic Church to become a department of the state with the emperor as its Pontifex Maximus, in fact if not in name.

Ecclesiastical policy

That Constantine was able to foresee this is incredible. Indeed, it is certain that he was not converted by his vision; and even when in old age he told it to Eusebius he was still unbaptised, as were all his sons. Throughout his life he was the patron, but not a member, of the Church. He and his successors, till the time of Gratian, were Pontifices Maximi, as all earlier emperors had been. Constantine's policy ecclesiastically was very like that of Augustus politically. Both realised that the old order was a thing of the past, and that many preferred that it should not be so considered. Augustus left the machinery of the ancient Republic apparently intact, and allowed it to fall naturally to pieces. Constantine did exactly the same with the old religion. A few temples, it is true, were closed; a few scandals put an end to; but the priests enjoyed their ancient revenues, and represented the state religion.

Donatist dispute reveals Constantine's attitude to the Church

As to the Christian Church, the emperor did all in his power to increase its popularity, and allowed its rulers complete freedom in self-government; the sole condition, to which they were only too ready to agree, was that there should be but one Church with which he could have dealings.

The policy seems especially clear in the Donatist dispute. Here we have Constantine at his best. The discontented party had appealed to him against Cæcilian, bishop of Carthage. He refused to intervene, and referred the matter to Pope Miltiades. The pope pronounced for Cæcilian. The Donatists appealed again. The emperor now placed the matter in the hands of the Church. He assembled, as far as possible, all the bishops in his dominions to meet at Arles, giving them every facility to get there. Their verdict was again in favour of Cæcilian. Constantine now confirmed the decree of the council, and the Donatists, as the African schismatics now began to be called, were no longer recognised by the government. Persecution, if enforcement of the imperial edict can be so called, was tried and failed. For the rest of Constantine's reign they were left alone.

But it is not the details of the disputes that are important, it is the principle involved. Constantine would encourage and support the Christians only as a corporate body, the Catholic Church. He left the bishops, *i.e.*, the representatives of the different churches, to decide what the Catholic Church consisted of, and then he virtually pronounced it the only legal body of Christians.

Constantine and Pope Sylvester

In all history there is no more absurd story than that of the "Donation" of Constantine to Pope Sylvester. It would be hard to find an educated man who now believes that Constantine accepted baptism at the hands of the pope, and then having presented him with authority over all the West, retired from Rome and built a new Rome called Constantinople after its founder. Yet late and ridiculous as is the story it contains one element of truth. This emperor did try to hand over to the Christians the control of their Church and the pope was the greatest

bishop in the world. He wished the Church to govern itself and assist him in restoring the morale of the Empire. But the Church must be a corporation which the Roman law could recognise, in other words, the Catholic Church.

Defeats of Licinius

Constantine's victory over Maxentius made him the greatest figure in the Roman world. His colleague Licinius was quite a secondary figure. In the first war Constantine won a victory at Cibalis (316), and added Illyricum to his dominions; but Licinius, still undefeated and master of the eastern provinces, now sought the support of the pagans against his powerful colleague. It was feared that there would be a new persecution; but Constantine, now more than ever the Christian champion, encountered Licinius at Byzantium, the seat of the future capital of eastern Rome. Crispus, the son of Constantine, gained a great victory over the fleet of Licinius, who was taken prisoner. This was the Actium of Constantine. He became by it master of the entire Roman world. This was in 323, five years after the outbreak of the quarrel between Alexander the bishop, and Arius the presbyter of Alexandria. Again Constantine pursued the identical policy he had adopted towards the Donatists. He wrote a very sensible letter to the Alexandrian church, urging them to peace, and then summoned not the western bishops but the entire Church to decide what the Faith or Symbol of unity actually was.

Character of Constantine

Constantine has often been accused of being a hypocrite. This was the opinion of some of his own time, as well as in modern days. It is scarcely a just estimate of his character. He seems to have been sincerely religious in his way, but in his position he had to be a profound

politician and to play a very difficult game. That he committed many acts which all moralists must condemn is certain; he could be ruthless to his enemies, and in his family life he resembles Herod the Great with his readiness to sacrifice his relatives to his security. But his long reign, which staved off the ruin of the empire; his genius in selecting Byzantium as the site of the future capital; and his foresight in selecting the Church as the best bulwark of civilisation, entitle him to be called Great as few who have borne that appellation have deserved. He was not great in character or genius. He seems to have been good-natured when not thwarted, accessible, courteous, not without humour. He desired a moral reform, and was a preacher by inclination. His very laws bear traces of his homiletical proclivities. He must have loved the sound of his own voice, and his greatest happiness may have been when he addressed an audience of bishops. He could even listen with pleasure to others, especially when they spoke in his praise. But his real title to fame is that he understood that the permanence of his empire depended on the Church which his predecessors had endeavoured to destroy. That the union of Church and Empire had some disastrous results cannot be denied; but, humanly speaking, that either could have continued without the other is unthinkable.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

Discovery of the Catacombs

On May 31, 1578, it was discovered that outside Rome were immense cemeteries, literally mined with tiers upon tiers of galleries and passages, cut out at great expense, with receptacles for the bodies of dead Christians. For many centuries people had been passing to and fro on their journeys without the slightest suspicion that beneath their feet lay a revelation of a Christian world, dating back to the first century of our era. Here were proofs of how they worshipped, how they had lived, what their religious ideas were. Of their genuineness there could be no doubt; for their very existence had been forgotten, and they had even ceased to be used for a thousand years. At first it was supposed that the poor persecuted Christians had used the disused sandpits, made by the builders, or even the miserable burying places of the poor. But such a humble origin has been completely disproved. The Catacombs are not in sandpits but in the rock; the burial places are the result of elaborate and expensive mining; their decorations show that the owners could command the best artistic taste of the time. Another feature of the Catacombs is their extent. They cannot now be accurately measured; but the most moderate computation is that there must have been 350 miles of galleries; and some have supposed that six million corpses are interred in

them.[1] As there is evidence that a good price was paid for each *loculus*, or receptacle for a coffin, the Christians must have been a very wealthy and numerous community in Rome.

But in addition there are deposited in the Catacombs numerous objects of domestic as well as religious use; inscriptions are naturally numerous, nor was there any sign of Christian abhorrence of pictorial representation of sacred subjects. We are even surprised that some of the ornamentation of the Catacombs is startlingly pagan in character, as though the artists at least could not depart from the conventional types which they had been trained to depict.

Roman funeral rites

The story of the Catacombs must be prefaced by a short description of Roman funerary customs, many of which have survived to the present day. When a Roman was at the point of death his nearest relative tried to catch his last breath in his mouth. He then drew the ring off the dead man's finger, and called him by name. The *Libitinarii*, or undertakers, were then summoned and the death was registered at the temple of Venus Libitina. A coin, as a fee to Charon, was put in the mouth of the deceased, and he was laid out in the vestibule of the house clad in his best robe, with his feet to the door. If he had gained a crown, it was placed on his head. The funeral procession took place on the eighth day, and was a very solemn affair. In the old days it was at night, later only the poor were buried after dark. A feast was given at the time, or after the funeral on the *Novendiale*. It was customary for the relatives to visit the tombs, and there

[1] This seems incredible, and the estimates are of course conjectural. Marchi, the first modern investigator of the Catacombs, suggested the galleries must have totalled 800 or 900 miles. 350 is the lowest estimate. Smith and Cheetham, *Dic. Chr. Antiq.*, vol. I, p. 301 *b*.

to offer sacrifices and gifts, called *inferiæ* and *parentalia*. The place where anyone, even a slave, was buried, was *religiosus*, that is to say consecrated to the gods, and to violate it was a serious crime, even punishable by death. The tombs of great families were called *columbaria*, because they had the appearance of dovecotes, with their niches for the reception of coffins or urns. It should be remembered that in Rome burning the dead was a comparatively modern custom, and only became popular in the later days of the Republic.

Christians able to buy cemeteries

This explains why it was possible for the Christians, though their religion was illegal, to purchase and construct at great expense their burial grounds, and also throws a light on many things to be found there. On becoming a Christian a man did not cease to be a Roman, and, as such, one wedded to custom in an unusual degree. As a matter of fact the Roman church, using the words in a local sense, is one of the most conservative institutions on earth, and still retains not only the habits of the most primitive Christianity, but those of an antiquity going back to the very foundation of the city. On one point the law was adamant, namely that no burials might be permitted within the city walls, and the Catacombs in consequence are all extra mural.

History of the Catacombs

It is at least possible that the earliest Christian Catacomb, that of S. Priscilla on the Via Salaria Nova, belongs to the first century. It was originally, however, not church property but the burial place of the Acilian *gens*. There were Jewish Catacombs, three have been discovered, which may be even earlier. Down to the peace of the Church, A.D. 313, the Catacombs were the usual places

for Christian burial. Their importance is shown by the fact that early in the third century Pope Zephyrinus placed his trusted adviser and successor over the cemetery which still bears his name as the Catacomb of St. Callistus. This form of interment, however, gradually ceased, no date later than A.D. 410 having been discovered, and in the time of Jerome's youth the Catacombs had become the resort of those who went to pray at the tombs of the martyrs. Pope Damasus (366-384) devoted his energies to the pious work of restoring them, employing for the purpose the services of an artist named Filocalus. Then came the calamities of Rome, the captures by Alaric and Gaiseric in the fifth century, and the repeated sieges during the Gothic Wars of the sixth. In the seventh century, when the popes were in constant fear of the Lombards, they began to transport the bodies of the martyrs within the city, and this continued till the ninth, when Paschal I (817-824) is said to have deposited the remains of 2300 martyrs in the Church of St. Praxedis. From that time the Catacombs ceased to be of interest to anybody. Their entrances were walled up or forgotten, and nothing was known of them till some workmen in 1578 discovered Christian crypts in a vineyard on the Via Salaria. Even then the discovery aroused little antiquarian interest, and the Catacombs were ruthlessly plundered by relic hunters and thieves. The real discoverer of their value was Antonio Bosio whose book *Roma Sotteranea* was published in 1632, three years after his death. His work was not really continued till the nineteenth century, when Padre Marchi began labours which were continued by de Rossi and others.

Making of a Catacomb

When a Catacomb was made, the first thing was to purchase an *area* or plot of ground with so much frontage

and of a certain depth. This required registration and various other legal formalities, so that it would be impossible to make the purchase in secret. Then a passage all around the *area* was excavated with staircases leading down to it. On the side of the gallery, *loculi* for the reception of coffins were cut; and larger chambers were made at the side for family vaults and the reception of distinguished men or martyrs. Then more galleries were made, till the whole floor became a network of passages. Then another floor (*piano*) was constructed, being approached by stairs from above. In the cemetery of Callistus there are as many as seven *piani*. Some think the lowest were the first to be made.

The cubicula

The chambers in the Catacombs were called *cubicula* (a word peculiarly Christian). These generally contained a table tomb, possibly for the celebration of the Eucharist. They were lighted, sometimes by air shafts, at others by lamps suspended from the ceiling. Many are highly decorated; and here we have a remarkable example of the transition from paganism to Christianity in art and symbolism, as well as the acceptance of decoration in a religious sense by the Church. This is one of the important lessons of the Catacombs.

Art in the Catacombs

The earliest Christians shared the Jews' objection to representing the truths of religion to the eye. Both felt that to do so partook of the nature of idolatry, against which both religions were a standing protest. Tertullian and his school were strongly opposed to all compromises with heathenism, and required painters or artists, who might be engaged in making or decorating idols, to abandon their profession on joining the Church. He

combats the idea that the prohibition to make an image was only partial because Moses by an exceptional divine command had set up the brazen serpent. This alone justified the departure from a rule which otherwise is of universal application. In his treatise *Against Hermogenes,* an artist by profession, who taught that matter had existed before creation, Tertullian, as is usual with him, makes Hermogenes' profession throw discredit on his false teaching; but the words *pingit sollicite* are somewhat ambiguous in their meaning. At first, however, if the tombs were to be beautiful in any way, they had to be in accordance with the conventional art of the age, and all that a Christian could do was to avoid offensive and glaring representations of heathen mythology. As has been well said, "At first they used many of the same decorations for mural devices as the pagans had used, always excepting anything that was immoral or idolatrous; introducing, however, here and there as the ideas occurred to them, something more significant of their own creed, until by and by the whole was exclusively Christian."

Decorations

It must be remembered that the very early Catacombs belonged to wealthy people, even akin to the imperial house, who could employ expensive artists, and, but only in a measure, direct their operations. One of the oldest specimens is in the cemetery of Domitilla. Here we have an elaborate vine on the ceiling, with little nude winged figures of children among the branches. In another early Catacomb, that of SS. Nereus and Achilleus, there are the four seasons with draped figures of girls with butterfly wings. The characteristic of all these decorations is their cheerfulness. Heathen they may be, but there is none of the gloomy view of death which prevailed in the Roman world. As a rule the art of the Catacombs, as has been

remarked of the literature of early Christianity, is fully on a par with that of the period; and when the efforts of the Christians are pronounced to be crude or feeble they are sharing in the artistic or literary decadence of their contemporaries. Some of the early designs are very beautiful. An example from the Catacomb of Prætextatus will suffice. It is declared to be very early. It is so called *arcosolium,* an arch over the tomb. There are four bands of foliage on the arch, with birds visiting their young. On the highest band are boys, symbolical of the Christian triumph. Beneath the foliage are a band of reapers. In the recess is a figure of Christ, bearing a lost sheep.

Christian symbolism

Here we have the gradual appearance of a Christian symbolism, or possibly of pagan art utilised to bring forth a Christian idea, for the figure is not a portrait of the Lord, but rather of Hermes carrying the ram. Orpheus also appears as a type of Christ, surrounded by biblical subjects. Moses smiting the rock, Daniel, David, Lazarus, and four pastoral scenes. The other favourite Christian symbolical representations are Noah, Jonah, the Sacrifice of Isaac, the Miracle of the Loaves, Adam and Eve, etc. It is noteworthy that the subjects chosen are mostly joyous. There are very few crosses, and these are triumphal, not penal ones. Sometimes they take the form of the letter T. Crucifixes, or figures of Christ on the Cross, are much later and do not go back beyond the fifth century. It is also strange that the Eucharist and the Last Supper are not to be found depicted. The favourite symbol of Christ is the fish, and in all representation of Christian funeral meals or *agapæ* this is prominent. After the Resurrection there are two accounts of the disciples partaking of fish with the Lord. In the Third Gospel the Risen Jesus asks the apostles if they have any

food with them. They give Him a portion of roast or boiled fish—this was at Jerusalem—and He took and ate of it before them. In the 21st chapter of John, after the miraculous draught of one hundred and fifty-three fishes, Christ prepares the meal. The disciples see a fire of coals prepared and on it roast fish (*opsarion*) and bread. The Lord takes the bread and likewise the fish and distributes it among them. Dried fish (*tarichos*) was the common food of the poor; fishes and bread were the scanty supplies taken by the multitude who went to hear Jesus in the wilderness when he fed them. Fish seems never to have been used as an offering to Greek or Roman gods. Salvation by the water of baptism seems to have been a reason for the popularity of the fish symbol. Tertullian speaks of baptised persons as wee "little fishes." In addition, the letters of the word ΙΧΘΥΣ make the Greek of Jesus, Christ, Son of God, Saviour. These all help to account for the great popularity of the symbol of the fish, which appears in so many forms on lamps, amphoræ, etc., in the Catacombs and elsewhere.

Funeral feasts

The *cubicula* were undoubtedly used for meals, either *agapæ* or funeral celebrations, in memory of the deceased. It will be remembered that the Christians of Bithynia gave up their common meal in obedience to Hadrian's edict against clubs. This edict did not affect the relatives of those buried in the Catacombs, who were quite at liberty to meet on their own property and to do what all their heathen friends did in honour of their deceased. Consequently these funeral feasts are depicted without scruple. There is a famous one in the Catacomb of SS. Marcellinus and Peter. The guests are seated, with a slave stationed to execute their orders; *Irene da calda* and *Agape misce mi* are written over two of the figures.

According to Augustine, in the fifth century these funerary feasts were scenes of at times untimely revelry, as the Lord's Supper had been in St. Paul's days at Corinth. The death, or rather "the birthday," of the martyrs was scrupulously observed by memorial feasts.

Eucharistic celebration

In some of the *loculi* glass vessels containing liquid have been found, and it was at one time supposed that this was the blood of the martyr, a view which had official sanction. But it is more likely that this was the consecrated Wine of the Eucharist. It is not quite established whether the altars in the Catacombs are primitive, nor can one be certain that Mass in the earliest days was said over the tombs of martyrs. But after the Peace of the Church the practice began to be general.

Baptism in the Catacombs

Baptism was performed in the Catacombs, as the so-called "baptisteries" testify, the most famous being that in the Catacomb of St. Pontianus. Here there is a natural stream and a cistern, the wall above has a fresco representing the baptism of Christ, and a richly jewelled cross. It appears that the Sacrament was never administered in a church; but, as Justin Martyr says, "in a spot where there is water," and later in a building specially designed for the purpose.

Were the Catacombs places of worship?

The next question which arises is whether the Catacombs were designed for the secret worship of the Christians, and whether any parts of them were intended to be churches. Their construction, the narrowness of the galleries, and the smallness of the *cubicula,* forbid the supposition that the Christians desired secret places to

worship in; and it is generally allowed that after the persecution of Nero till the time of Decius (250), the Christians were seldom molested in the city. Later, in the time of the Diocletian trouble, they certainly were in danger when they assembled. But from 70 to 250, and from 257-303, Christianity in Rome was rarely molested except in the case of individuals. In the Catacomb of St. Agnes a supposed church was discovered. Elsewhere worship seems only to have been possible in the comparatively small *cubicula*.

There are Catacombs in Naples and Alexandria, but these are not comparable to the Roman. These throw, indeed, a light upon early Christianity, the importance of which is even yet hardly realised. Even if the number of interments has been greatly exaggerated, the church of Rome must have been from the first numerous and wealthy, and it certainly numbered important members of Roman society among its adherents. The religion of many of these was less Christian than we are apt to suppose, and evidently their inscriptions and decoration were not invariably sanctioned by the clerical authorities. When, for example, they put D.M. on a tomb, whether they knew it or not, it was the frankly pagan *Dis Manibus*. They celebrate the victories of a famous charioteer who won thirty races. They have no hesitation in perpetuating, as far as was consistent with a very moderate profession of Christianity, the customs of their ancestors. Yet there is in general a very cheerful and even triumphant spirit displayed in the inscriptions, which shows that those who had accepted Christ as the Lord had won the victory over death and the grave.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DAY OF TRIUMPH

The history of the Church has been traced from the first days of its origin at Jerusalem; and the first chapter of its history closes, not with the edict of Milan, but when Constantine assembled and entertained the bishops of Nicæa. Then it was that the Church Universal was welcomed by its former enemy as his indispensable ally. How great the triumph was must be considered.

Unpromising beginning of Christianity (*a*) *among Jews*

No religion could have begun under more unpromising conditions than did Christianity when it originated in a nation, which was about to bring ruin upon itself by its mad revolts against Rome. The Founder had proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah, and had disappointed all Jewish expectations in regard to the looked-for deliverer. He had died a death on which the Law had pronounced a curse. If He had really risen from the dead, only His followers had seen Him. That He should be accepted by the Jews as their leader could hardly be expected.

(*b*) *Among Gentiles*

On the other hand, the new religion must have appeared to Gentiles as a species of bastard Judaism, without the prestige of antiquity on which the Jews laid so much stress. The miracles of Christ were not of a kind to appeal to them, and seemed to compare unfavourably with those of other sages. The religion was presented in a

simple form without the attraction of philosophy. Magic and astrology, which had a great fascination for the age, were discouraged. The New Testament literature did not greatly commend itself; it was devoid of artistic merit, and the language was mostly that of the common people. There were many new, or comparatively new, religions which were equally likely to attract votaries. That a faith with so many disadvantages should succeed was rendered more improbable because of the unsociable reputation of the Christians. Everywhere they had the character of being bad citizens, of hating the human race, in other words, the existing order of society.

Difficulties overcome by Christianity

When these drawbacks are considered, the success of Christianity is truly amazing, and one's astonishment grows as one traces the successive stages of its triumphs. It had successively to overcome: (1) The danger of dissolution when it broke with Judaism; (2) the loss of prestige when it renounced Gnosticism; (3) the enmity of the people; (4) the contempt of the intellectual classes; (5) the suspicion of the Roman authorities; (6) a determined attempt to destroy it, by emperors whose great exploits had saved the Roman state.

Disruption

As has been repeatedly pointed out, Christianity was at first, not only Jewish, but narrowly so, and but for the work of Peter and Paul it would, as far as can be judged, have perished with all the Jewish sects: Essenes, Therapeutæ, Zealots, Sadducees, even the followers of the Baptist, none of which survived the fall of Jerusalem. It cannot be stated positively, but it is at least probable that by the Neronian persecution the Gentile Christians were in the majority. By the close of the first century it

was hardly possible to be a Jew and a Christian. Yet the Gentile Church had been so firmly established that it could stand alone. This marks the first stage of the triumph of the new religion.

Gnosticism

In a sense Gnosticism was the bid for recognition in the Church by the intellectual class. The new religion was too simple for educated men, and they demanded a philosophy. This the Church almost contemptuously refused to grant. "What has philosophy to do with us?" said Tertullian. The struggle was protracted, but the Church again won the day by declining to consist of two elements, a gifted few, and a majority of ignorant believers. Gnosticism would have popularised Christianity with the cultured class, but robbed it of all virility. The strength of the Church was shown by its firmness in combating the danger, and with the overthrow of Gnosticism it was able to advance in triumph.

Contempt of the cultured class

Celsus, probably in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, taunts the Christians with inviting, not the best but the meanest of mankind. The Mysteries invited the pure to participate, the Christians, the worst sinners, etc. To the very last, even when paganism had become illegal and by law only catholic Christians were eligible for public office, there was a conspiracy of silence among men of letters to ignore the Christians. Claudian, in the fifth century, was the panegyrist of Christian emperors, and yet writes as though Christianity had no existence whatever. The silence of the late classical writers has been used as an argument to prove that Christianity never existed and was invented later. The real answer of the Church was to produce men, from Tertullian to Augustine, who really led the thought of the age.

Suspicion of disloyalty

The Christians were long believed to have been a cause of the ruin of the Empire, especially in the West. Their loyalty had been at least lukewarm, and their persecutions were due to their refusal to worship the emperor. *Fac sacrum Cæsari,* said the magistrate, and the reply of the martyr was *Non facio.* As long as this continued the Church and Empire were at war. In Constantine, the Empire sued for peace with the victorious Church. The result was unexpected, but a remark of Professor Gwakin is strictly true: "Constantine did what all his predecessors failed in doing. He made Christians worship the Emperor."

Victory over declared hostility

The Church in the Diocletian persecution had been for eight years striving with the Empire in the eye of all the world; this added to the completeness of its victory. It must not be forgotten that such emperors as Diocletian and Galerius had saved the state, one by his political and the other by his military successes.

Rapid triumph of Christianity over the old ideas

The next thing to be considered is, What did this triumph mean? First, it signified the ruin of paganism in the entire Mediterranean world. From the day of the Edict of Milan its doom was sealed. Not only the religion, but the ideas connected with paganism, had received sentence of death. To most people nothing seemed changed; all went on as before. Yet the old world was stricken never to revive. The religion was only a part—the art, the literature, the philosophy, the mode of life, were all sentenced to be destroyed. The life was gone out of them. There were survivals which persisted, but they were nothing but survivals; and if any lived, it was

disguised under a form of Christianity. The ancient religion was not disendowed or even disestablished by Constantine, nevertheless it had no power to revive. Its fall came with astonishing rapidity. Constantine, the son of Constantine (337-361), ordered the sacrifices to cease. Julian's attempt to revive paganism was an utter failure; when he died in 363, a professed Christian, Jovian, was chosen as emperor. Gratian, his son (375), refused to be Pontifex Maximus. Under Theodosius I (379-395) the priesthood was disendowed, and the Temple of Serapis at Alexandria torn down. Paganism was now illegal; catholic Christianity had become the religion of the Roman world. Things had indeed moved rapidly, when Constantine only dare own himself a Christian on his deathbed in 337; yet in fifty years a pagan emperor had become unthinkable. The philosophers went the same way as the worshippers of the gods of antiquity. They held their schools, they disputed, they trained orators, but chiefly for Christian pulpits. They and their systems were doomed and faded.

Moral improvement

From the days of Constantine the imperial court was greatly purified. That there were virtuous emperors before is certain. Probably no Christian emperor was as good a man as Marcus Aurelius; but in the eleven centuries of Christian Byzantine history it is hard to recall a monster of iniquity comparable to some of the Cæsars of pagan Rome. Whether true or not, stories of unmentionable depravity are related of Tiberius in his late years, Caligula, Nero, Commodus, and others. Rumour never taxed any Christian emperor with such crimes. Even the secret history or *Anecdotes* of Procopius, which makes out Theodora as an utter profligate as an actress, does not suggest that the empress disgraced Justinian as his wife,

on the contrary she seems to have been charitable, too interested in ecclesiastical questions, and in the most critical event in her husband's reign, the Nika sedition, her courage saved his throne. Down to the day when the last of the Byzantine Cæsars fell defending the city against the Turks (1453) the emperor, in fact, with the patriarch, represented Christianity and orthodoxy. Bad, cruel, and immoral emperors there undoubtedly were, but none who set the laws of God and man at defiance. A Michael the Drunkard was only mildly wicked compared with Commodus or Heliogabalus. Even if the stories of such emperors are grossly exaggerated, the very fact that they were current shows the appalling state of heathen morals. The absurd etiquette of the Byzantine Court had at least the merit of preventing the wild excesses of ancient Rome.

The emperor claims to be the guardian of the Church

Another effect of the triumphant way in which Christianity won the respect and recognition of the Roman government was what is called Cæsaro-papalism. The emperor became the head of the Christian religion. The majority of the bishops heartily supported him in his claim. This had its good and its evil side. It made everyone who differed from the Church an enemy of the State, and it was detrimental to the morals of many of the clergy in that it tempted them to become tools of the government. Nor was it only the emperors who claimed this authority. Every king, prince, or potentate, asserted this imperial privilege. The climax came in the days of the Reformation, when the rulers of Europe laid down the principle *Cuius regio, eius religio,* in other words, that they had the right to prescribe what religion their subjects should follow.

High hopes at first

It must have seemed to the Christians of the early part of the fourth century that heaven had come to earth. When Constantine had made himself master of the entire Empire, and had assembled the bishops to meet at Nicæa, Eusebius cannot contain his delight. The emperor assembled the very men whom the government had persecuted, and feasted them in his own palace. Many of these bore the marks of injuries inflicted in the persecution. To see these men honoured as guests of the emperor seemed to the bishop incredible. "One might have thought," he says, "that a picture of Christ's Kingdom was thus shadowed forth, and a dream rather than a reality."

But the painful experience of centuries has shown that the Kingdom of Christ has not yet come, and even forces us to enquire whether the Church had gained or not by its triumph over the world.

Favours bestowed on the Church

Favours were showered upon it by Constantine. The clergy might receive gifts and legacies freely. Laws were enacted to increase their privileges. They were relieved of the most burthensome office, that of "Decurion," the possession of which meant inevitable ruin, as it entailed responsibility for all the taxes of a district. But this caused such a multitude to crowd the priesthood, that only those who were not sufficiently wealthy to be eligible might be ordained. In this way the Church lost the help of many of the educated classes as clergy. Churches everywhere arose, and slaves might be manumitted in them. Severe laws were proclaimed regulating morals, and some of the most cruel punishments were abolished under Christian influences. In Constantinople the first Christian city was soon to arise.

Powers bestowed on the bishops

The Christians received the right of managing the affairs of the Church and of legislating for its welfare. Their councils became part of the organisation of the Empire. Constantine tried to realise the nineteenth century ideal of "a free Church in a free State." He never interfered in matters of faith; but gave the bishops liberty to decide. But when they had come to a conclusion, the emperor enforced it. Thus troops were sent to Africa to quell the Donatists, and the prominent Arians were banished, as later was Athanasius himself. Thus the principle of persecution was introduced, and also the Church was taught to look to the State to punish those who questioned its authority. By being recognised the clergy became more and more a definite order of society, and more and more separated from the laity. The gradual disappearance of the old right of the people to choose their spiritual rulers, till the selection was vested in some eminent clergy or in the civil ruler, began with the Peace of the Church.

Character of Christianity changed

The fact that the Church was in close alliance with the State tended to change the whole character of Christianity, which became daily more and more of a privileged religion. Instead of being a bar to magistracies and important positions, it often became the sole avenue to places of emolument. Many began to embrace the Faith with a view to personal advantages, and a perfect wave of hypocrisy was endangering the Church. But on the other hand, to many the world seemed more its enemy than ever when the Church was in no danger of persecution; and the finer spirits revolted against the comfortable religion which Christianity had become. The result was a rush into world renunciation, which found its expression

in monasticism. The best Christianity became ascetic, and the monk the real director of the Church for centuries. Men sought in the desert for solitude and discipline, now that they were denied the glory of martyrdom.

Could Christianity rule the world?

The Church had entered upon a new era. It had been called upon to prove whether Christianity was capable of ruling the world. The policy of Diocletian and Constantine had galvanised the Roman empire into a fresh manifestation of life, and had given it a century more of world governance. But in truth the Empire called upon the Church in a time of desperation. It was destined, by the powerful aid of the Faith, to revive in Constantinople, and to survive in Rome in a changed form, but by the reign of Constantine it was practically dead at its extremities. Within a century of his death Britain, Gaul, Spain, and Africa, had virtually ceased to be; within two centuries the West was practically lost; within three Egypt, Syria, and the East were under a very different master, with another religion carrying all before it. For society was, from various causes, rotten to the core; and there was a lack of vitality manifested in government, in art, and in literature.

Revival of Church in time of Constantine

The work of the Church was really not to save the empire, but to conserve what was good in itself, and what it was able to assimilate in the world order. All the vitality of mankind seemed concentrated in the Church. Yet it is a remarkable fact that there was a marked lack of great men even among the Christians at the close of the first period of their history; and it may seem a paradox, but is nevertheless true, that when the Diocletian persecution began the Church was almost as decadent as the

Empire itself. It was the generation after Nicæa which produced another series of Christian leaders comparable to Origen, Cyprian, and Dionysius of Alexandria. In other words, the Church began to rise to its opportunity not at the time of the Edict of Milan, or even the Council of Nicæa, but when Christians realised what was actually meant by the alliance of Church and Empire.

CHAPTER XXV

THE EXTENT OF THE CHURCH

What was the extent of the Church by 323?

The Council of Nicæa was ecumenical in that it represented not a local, nor national, nor even an imperial Church, but one spread abroad throughout the world. Persia and the Goths were said to have been represented by bishops, as well as all parts of the Roman world. Practically it was a gathering of Orientals, but in theory the whole Church sent its bishops to decide the burning controversies of the day. The question we have to answer is what was the extent of the Christian world at this particular period, *i.e.*, the opening of the Council of Nicæa? This can best be done by tracing its advance from the earliest times in those places which were the great centres of expansion.

Jerusalem and Palestine

One therefore starts from Jerusalem. When the Church there was dispersed, it fled, in accordance with the Lord's command, to Pella. Jewish Christian communities, Ebionites, Nazarenes, etc., established themselves east of the Jordan. Justin, a native of Samaria, Eusebius, who as bishop of Cæsarea, knew the country, and Jerome, who spent years in Palestine, have very little to tell us of them. When Hadrian destroyed Jerusalem the very name was partly forgotten by the inhabitants, and the Christian bishop, henceforward a Gentile, was known as bishop of Aelia. It does not appear that the community was a

flourishing one; nevertheless it is evident that in Christian circles the bishop enjoyed high consideration because he presided over the mother church. The bishop of Cæsarea, Stratonis, was recognised as the head of the Church in Palestine, but Christianity was very weak there, existing chiefly in the Greek cities. In Galilee the Jews were so numerous that in the days of Constantine there was not a church in any of its chief towns, where there were neither Greeks, Samaritans, nor Christians. Throughout Palestine the Jewish population was very strong; and in places the Christians were kept out till almost the fifth century.

Damascus

A dated inscription in Greek (A.D. 318) shows there was a "Synagogue" of the Marcionites near Damascus, thus proving the presence of some sort of Christianity; but the native believers were evidently few. There is little, if any, Christian literature in Palestinian or western Syria. Antioch, with its apostolic tradition, its importance as the capital of the East and the third city of the Empire, was from the earliest times a centre of Christianity; but in the list of bishops there are but two Syrian names. Its famous school of theology was wholly Greek.

The East

Eastward was a Christianity, oriental both in character and language, with its headquarters at Edessa. Even if we reject the legend of Abgar's correspondence with Christ, it is evident that Edessa was more or less Christian by the middle of the second century. The city is famous for its two eminent, and not very dangerous, heretics, Tatian and Bardesanes. It became a centre of Christian missions: for it issued Tatian's *Diatessaron* and the earliest Syriac version of the New Testament.

Persia

There was a Persian bishop at Nicæa, and the early existence of the Persian church is proved alike by the rise of the Manichean heresy and of the great persecution of Christians in the fourth century. It must not be forgotten that when the Parthian monarchy was overthrown, the Persians restored not only their authority but their ancient religion, and Zoroastrianism was ruled by a powerful and dogmatic priesthood. Here the Christians endured a persecution far more fanatical than at the hands of the Romans; and they suffered the more, because their religion was regarded as belonging to the rival empire. Of the remoter East, the India converted by St. Thomas, too little is known to include it in the present survey.

Armenia

Outside the Empire, between the Black and Caspian Seas, was the first nation which definitely adopted the faith of Christ. These were the Armenians, a race akin to the Persians with a religion based on that of the Magi, but on its more barbarous side showing Scythian and other influences. At the beginning of the fourth century their King Tiridates III with his people, by the advice of his kinsman Gregory, the Illuminator, accepted Christianity as the national religion, and for that reason were attacked by Maximin Daza, the heathen emperor, who was the rival of Licinius. Gregory, the Illuminator, had been brought up and accepted the Faith in Cappadocia. In early days Syriac was the ecclesiastical language of Armenia.

Asia Minor

Undoubtedly the most Christian country before the Peace of the Church was Asia Minor. From the first it

was the scene of apostolic labours. Thither Barnabas and Saul went on their first missionary journey. It was the scene of the labours of St. Paul; the Asiatic Provinces are prominent in the list in Acts ii, and are addressed in I Peter; Hierapolis was the home of Philip and his daughters; from Ephesus came the Fourth Gospel. Pliny testifies to the widespread influence of the Faith in Bithynia. The seven cities of Asia in the Apocalypse naturally occur to us. But it is unnecessary to say more. Inscriptions, acts of martyrs, all the available sources bear testimony to the extraordinary spread of Christianity in the whole country. Harnack thinks that, by the time of Constantine, at least half the population was Christian, and many parts were entirely so. Nor must it be forgotten that for many centuries it was the most important part of the Eastern Empire, as well as the home of the Christian teachers who shaped the destiny of the Church of the fourth and fifth centuries.

Egypt

Egypt was the original home of monasticism, Jewish and Christian, and Alexandria the centre of Christian learning. Yet of the origin of the Church, which exercised so much influence on Christianity, we know scarcely anything till about A.D. 189, when Demetrius became bishop. Hitherto the Christians seem to have been under the Alexandrian bishop and his twelve presbyters, but Demetrius organised a diocesan episcopate with a bishop for each nome, the towns being in the charge of a presbyter. All were under the authority of the metropolitan see of Alexandria, which administered the country with patriarchal or papal authority. The widespread influence of the Faith is shown by the existence of the Coptic versions of the Scripture in the different dialects. St. Anthony's impulse to monasticism was due to his hearing

the Gospel precept "Go, sell all thou hast, etc.," read in Church in his native language. The Christians already outnumbered the Jews in Egypt.

Cyrene

Cyrene and the Pentapolis, which lay west of Egypt, is mentioned in the New Testament, and was full of Jews; little is known of Christianity there till we reach the third century, and learn that Sabellius, a native, and his doctrine, were popular there. Dionysius as bishop of Alexandria writes to the metropolitan Basilides (bishop of the districts of the Pentapolis), about the Lenten fast.

Gregory Thaumaturgus

From the Syrian school of Origen, after he had been expelled from Alexandria by Demetrius, came one of the greatest Christian missionaries in Gregory Thaumaturgus, who went to Neo-Cæsarea in Pontus and found seventeen Christians, and left at his death seventeen pagans in the city. An oration by Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, describes his method. He would not deprive the people of their pleasures or their religious solemnities, but converted them into something Christian. "For instead of Pandia, Diasia, Dionysia, and the rest of your festivals, the feasts of Peter, Paul, Thomas, Sergius, Marcellus, Leontius, Panteelomon, Antoninus, Mauricius, and the other martyrs are celebrated, but decently and in order."

Carthage and the African Church

Following the coast of Africa westward we reach a most important centre of Christianity in Carthage. Here, as at Alexandria, a church suddenly appears in full vigour, without even a legend like Alexandria's of being founded by St. Mark. Tertullian implies that it was founded from Rome. It may have been Greek-speaking originally, as the martyr Perpetua conversed with a presbyter in that

language. That Tertullian wrote Greek treatises does not seem to prove anything in so erudite a man. But Carthaginian Christianity was emphatically Latin, and its vocabulary is full of legal and military terms. The progress of Christianity westward along the sea is marked by the records of the martyrs. We hear of them in the provinces adjacent to Africa, Numidia, Byzacum, and Mauretania. But the remarkable thing is the number of bishops attending the African councils even before Cyprian's accession in 248. It seems that the African churches, in contrast with the Egyptians, had each its own bishop. Of detached parish priests we hear nothing. The names of the African Christians are almost entirely Latin or Greek; but among the martyrs we meet with Punic names, such as Namphamo, the first sufferer, and a woman named Miggin.

Rome

Passing over to Italy we find that the church of Rome in the middle of the third century supported a bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers and doorkeepers, and more than fifteen hundred widows and afflicted. This implies a very large community, and is confirmed by the amount of those buried in the Catacombs which are reckoned by millions. To arrive at even a rough estimate is well-nigh impossible. Harnack supposes that at this time there were 30,000, considering this below the mark. A rapid increase, he believes, took place later between 250 and 312. Of the size, wealth, and influence of the Roman church being considerable from an early date, there can be no question. In southern Italy churches were evidently numerous; but north of Rome, till the fourth century, there must have been but a few of them.

Greece

Paul's labours in Macedonia and Achæa seem to have had little permanent fruit, as it is surprising how little is known of the churches in the Balkan peninsula. The church of Corinth is a partial exception, owing to the dissension which evoked the epistle of the Roman church (I Clement), and to the eminence of its bishop, Dionysius, about 171. From his letter to Soter of Rome it would appear that the Romans sent the poorer churches liberal contributions. It is remarkable how small a part Greece proper played in early ecclesiastical history, or for that matter in any department of the life of the Empire. It was then the home of very few Greek writers. Plutarch is an exception. There are many Christian inscriptions along the coast of the Adriatic in Dalmatia.

Gaul

How Christianity spread in Gaul before the middle of the third century is not known. There are various legends of a late date of apostolic missions to the country; but there is no definite information before the persecution of Lyons and Vienne. The letter, written by the afflicted church to the churches of Phrygia and Asia, is in Greek, and the community was evidently one of foreigners who had settled in Lyons as traders, as the next bishop after the persecution was Irenæus, himself an Asiatic and a disciple of Polycarp. He tells us that approaches were made to the Celtic inhabitants and that he used to address them in their own language, and for that reason his Greek is faulty. Evidently Asiatic Greeks brought Christianity up the Rhone, and also along the coast to the Greek cities like Marseilles. The acts of the Synod of Arles (314) are our chief authority for bishoprics in Gaul before Nicæa. The fact that Constantine Chlorus is praised for not destroying the church buildings in Gaul

during the persecution is a proof of their existence; and his son Constantine must have learned something of Christianity in that country before he decided upon a policy of toleration.

Spain

Spanish Christianity is obscure till the beginning of the fourth century, despite the fact that Spain was the goal of Paul's missionary enterprise which, according to Clement, he probably reached. No single Christian of any importance appears in Spain till Hosius of Cordova, the western bishop who had so much influence with Constantine. But the Council of Elvira (*circa* 303), whose acts have survived, throws light on the extent of the Church. It appears that all the provinces were represented by their bishops or by inferior clergy. It shows that the Church was diffused over the peninsula. The canons are remarkable for the severity of the penalties; and the offences specified disclose a very lax morality on the part of both clergy and people. Evidently many Christians had little scruple about complying with pagan customs or Judaising.

Britain

Britain had been for centuries a province of Rome, and it was the scene of several attempts to seize the supreme power. At the same time it was never thoroughly Romanised, and was the home of officials rather than resident citizens of the Empire. The only records of the presence of Christianity are the alleged martyrdom of St. Alban and the presence of three British bishops at the Council of Arles. The papal legend quoted by Bede is that the King Lucius sent for missionaries from Pope Eleutherus (*circa* 180-190), but this is very suspicious, especially when we find a claim made by the Roman bishops that

all the countries of the West had been evangelised by them. In fact, both in Britain and Northern Gaul, the arrival of the Gospel message appears to have been late.

Churches unevenly distributed

After this survey it seems evident that the churches were very unevenly distributed. Here and there was a dense Christian population, and elsewhere it was very small. The Church was especially strong in the cities, and more so in the largest and wealthiest. The most varied estimates have been made of the proportion of Christians to the rest of the inhabitants of the Empire. In the time of Decius, Gibbon thinks one in twenty. Friedlander, according to Harnack, thinks it was not much more in the time of Constantine, though it is Harnack's opinion that the real age of Christian expansion was after Decius (250). It has been even conjectured that by Constantine's day half of the Romans were Christians. There were far more in the East than in the West.

Christian population

Harnack arranges the Christian population in order of density thus:

Practically Christian—(1) All Asia Minor in the modern sense. (2) Thrace opposite Bithynia. (3) Armenia. (4) Edessa.

Christianity strong—(1) Antioch and Coele Syria. (2) Cyprus. (3) Egypt and the Thebaid. (4) Rome. (5) Africa. (6) Spain. (7) Possibly the coasts of Achaia. South coast of Gaul.

Christianity weak—(1) Palestine. (2) Inland Phoenicia. (3) Arabia. (4) Parts of Mesopotamia. (5) Balkans (interior). (7) Northern Italy. (8) Mauretania and Tripolitana.

One thing is evident: if the lowest estimate of the

numbers of the Christians be taken, it was hopeless on the part of Decius, Valerian, and the Diocletian emperors to suppress them. Their only possible means of doing so would have been by modern oriental methods of wholesale massacres, which the Romans were too civilised to adopt, and the Christians too wise to encourage by open rebellion.

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